MONDAY
January 13, 2025

BENGALURU
CITY EDITION
20 Pages ₹ 6.00

THE HINDU

www.thehindu.com

INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

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RNI No. KARENG/1970/49945

Vol. 56 • No. 11

Printed at » Chennai » Coimbatore » Bengaluru » Hyderabad » Madurai » Noida » Visakhapatnam » Thiruvananthapuram » Kochi » Vijayawada » Mangaluru » Tiruchirapalli » Kolkata » Hubballi » Mohali » Malappuram » Mumbai » Tirupati » Lucknow » Cuttack » Patna

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Is Trump's fiat for the EU to buy U.S. oil justified?

EU had already turned to U.S., to stay off Russia

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BREEZING THROUGH

Sabalenka and Zverev ease into round two

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NEARBY

Cong. Legislature Party meet today

BENGALURU
Amid a palpable shadowboxing over leadership in the Congress, a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) is being held along with the meeting of KPCC office-bearers on Monday.
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Boy killed in road accident on his birthday

BENGALURU
A 12-year-old boy was killed on his birthday and his elder brother injured when a lorry knocked down their motorcycle on Hennur Bande Main Road on Saturday night.
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Docking trial: ISRO succeeds in nudging two satellites closer

By bringing Chaser and Target within three metres of each other, the agency has overcome last week's setback caused by an unexpected drift

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Trying to dock two satellites in space for the first time, the Indian Space Research Organisation announced early on Sunday that they were brought within three metres of each other in a trial attempt. It then moved them back to a safe distance.

"SpaDeX Docking Update: A trial attempt to reach up to 15m and further to 3m is done. Moving back spacecraft to safe distance. The docking process will be done after analysing data further," the space agency posted on X.

An important project of the ISRO, the SPaDeX mission was designed to develop and demonstrate the technology needed for spacecraft rendezvous, docking and undocking using two small satellites. A PSLV C60 rocket carried them – SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target) – to space from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on December 30. Earlier on Sunday, ISRO said the two satellites were within 15 metres of each other.

A PSLV C60 rocket had carried the satellites to space from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on December 30. PTI

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CID probe may lead to clash between legislature and executive, says Horatti

C.T. RAVI ISSUE

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Taking exception to the government's decision to institute a CID inquiry into the alleged derogatory remarks made by BJP MLC, C. T. Ravi, against Women and Child Development Minister, Laxmi Hebbalkar, in the Legislative Council during the Winter Session of the State legislature in Belagavi, House Chairman Basavaraj Horatti has said that it could lead to an unnecessary clash between the legislature and the executive.

"I am not sure about the scope of the inquiry. The Council has the sovereign rights to decide on the issues to be discussed in the House. The Chair has already given the ruling on the issue based on the Constitution, Rules of Business of Karnataka Legislative Council, Rules of Business of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, Practice and Procedure of Parliament by M.N. Kaul and S.L. Shakdhar, and Parliamentary Procedures by Subhash Kashyap," Mr. Horatti said in a letter to Home Minister G. Parameshwara.

Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti has written to Home Minister G. Parameshwara on the issue that kicked up a storm.

Powers

Drawing the Home Minister's attention to the rights of the Council Chairman in parliamentary practices, he said: "The Council has the powers to punish members for their bad behaviour and abusive language."

He added, "The Chairman's ruling is final since the power to ensure discipline in the House and organise the business of the House is with the Chairman."

Mr. Ravi has been accused of using derogatory words against Ms. Hebbalkar on December 19, 2024, the last day of the Winter Session. The incident triggered widespread condemnation, and he was arrested by the Belagavi police from the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha premises resulting in a political slugfest between the ruling Congress and the BJP. Mr. Horatti felt that the move of the government to institute a CID probe that would come in the way of special powers given to the Chairman in the parliamentary practices would lead to an unnecessary tiff between the legislature and executive.

"You are also aware that what happens inside the House is the jurisdiction of the Chairman. Both legislature and executive have to function within the constitutional provisions and with mutual respect. You have also held various roles in constitutional institutions and I hope that you also function under the Constitution," Mr. Horatti said.

'Not yet got the letter'

Meanwhile, the Home Minister said that he had not received the letter though he had read about the letter in the media.

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Udders of three cows slashed

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The incident at Chamarajpet takes a political turn; case registered

In a shocking incident of cruelty to animals, miscreants slashed the udders and stabbed the legs of three cows, which were resting by the street side at Pension Mohalla, Chamarajpet, here on Saturday night, leaving them writhing in pain in a pool of blood. The incident came to light on Sunday morning when passers-by found the cows moaning in pain and bleeding and alerted the owner, Karna, reportedly a Hindutva activist in the area.

The incident soon took a political turn with several BJP leaders, including Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R. Ashok, rushing to the spot and condemning the incident. Hundreds gathered in the area. While the miscreants are yet to be identified, BJP leaders and Hindutva organisations termed it an act of "Jihadi terror".

"This is a deliberate terrorist act aimed to create fear in the community. If the State government doesn't apprehend the miscreants in two days, we will observe a 'Black Sankranti' across the State," Mr. Ashok said.

Following their protests, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Home Minister G. Parameshwara reportedly spoke to officials concerned and ordered a speedy investigation. "This is an inhumane act and whoever has done this will be brought to book. The police are probing the case," Mr. Siddaramaiah said.

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Kumbh confluence

Countdown on: Preparations in full swing in the Sangam area of Prayagraj on Sunday, the eve of the start of the 45-day Maha Kumbh being held after 12 years. The first major bathing ritual, or Shahi Snan, will be held on Monday. SANDEEP SAXENA (ANOTHER PHOTO, REPORT ON PAGE 12)

Border issue: Bangladesh summons Indian envoy

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

The interim government of Bangladesh on Sunday expressed "deep concern" about the prevailing situation along the India-Bangladesh borders.

Dhaka's message was conveyed by Foreign Secretary Mohammad Jashim Uddin to the Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma during a meeting held soon after the Adviser on Home Affairs, Jehangir Alam Chowdhury, informed presspersons that India has been erecting fences in five locations on the Indo-Bangladesh borders, and alleged that Bangladesh was not consulted before start of work. He announced that the Indian envoy was being "summoned" to discuss the situation.

Mr. Verma met the media after the meeting as heated exchanges continued between the two sides. "We have an understanding with regard to fencing the border for security. BSF and BGB have been in communication," Mr. Verma told the media.

"Foreign Secretary Ambassador Md. Jashim Uddin today expressed deep concern of Government of Bangladesh to High Commissioner of India Pranay Verma... over the recent activities of the BSF of India along the Bangladesh-India Border," said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) of Bangladesh in a press statement, which referred to the attempts to construct barbed-wire fencing as "unauthorised".

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Declining fertility levels push up Kerala's maternal mortality ratio

C. Maya
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala's maternal mortality ratio, the lowest in the country at 19 per one lakh live births, is now climbing steadily, much to the consternation of the State Health Department. The reasons for the increase may be beyond the control of officials.

The latest Sample Registration System special bulletin on maternal mortality in India (2018-20), brought out by the Registrar-General of India, put Kerala's MMR at 19.

However, while it depended on a sample survey to arrive at the figure, the State Health Department's actual estimates of maternal deaths – Kerala has near 100% institutional deliveries – put the figure at 29.

Except during 2020-21, when Kerala lost many women to COVID-19 during pregnancy and childbirth, the State had consistently maintained a firm grip over maternal mortality. Ironically, the current spike is not because more women are dying but because there are fewer childbirths than ever in the State.

The State has now hit a low of 3,93,231 births from an average of 5-5.5 lakh annually earlier, show the latest data of the Economics and Statistics Department of the State. It is this dip in the denominator that is pushing the MMR up and not necessarily an actual spike in maternal deaths.

The Health Department puts live births in the State between 3.4 lakh and 3.9 lakh currently. The full Vital Statistics Report (VSR) for 2023 is expected by January-end.

The decline in fertility levels and changing demographics, many fear, are having an irrevocable impact on the State's social fabric, and have been at the heart of many policy-level discussions in Kerala, especially in the past three years.

From an average of 5.5 lakh annual births since the 1980s, the graph went below the five-lakh mark for the first time in 2016, when 4,96,262 live births were recorded. Since 2018, the figure has been plummeting steadily, never going above the five-lakh mark again. The last published VSR (2021) recorded the total number of live births as 4,19,767.

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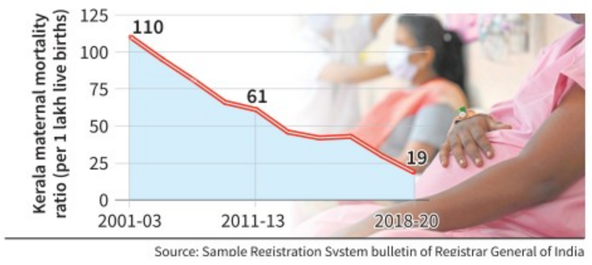
A worrying trend

Kerala's MMR is beginning to climb now because of fewer child births than ever in the State



Source: Sample Registration System bulletin of Registrar General of India

HAL's latest Combat Air Teaming System completes crucial test

Hemanth C.S.
BENGALURU

Ahead of Aero India 2025, which is scheduled to be held next month, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) achieved a significant milestone by conducting the engine ground run of a full-scale demonstrator, Combat Air Teaming System (CATS) – Warrior, on Saturday.

"The flagship programme of HAL, Combat Air Teaming System achieved a significant milestone by successfully conducting the Engine Ground Run of a Full-Scale Demonstrator, CATS – Warrior," HAL announced.

It added that this demonstrates the synergy between various R&D centres of HAL with Aircraft design and integration by the Aircraft Research & Design Centre (ARDC), indigenous Mission Computer from SLRDC and indigenous power plant from AERDC.

Combat Air Teaming System successfully conducted the engine ground run of CATS - Warrior. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The prototype aircraft is slated to be unveiled at Aero India 25.

It can be recalled that the defence PSU has been developing CATS which involves the Light Combat Aircraft Tejas as the mother-ship platform along with components such as the Hunter, Alpha and Warrior.

A senior HAL official involved in HAL's R&D has said the CATS is a combined air teaming system with the mothership flying on top along with Hunter which can inflict strikes deep inside the enemy territory. The Alpha will be equipped with swarm drones and the Warrior can strike after entering nearly 700 km inside the enemy territory.

"We don't want our pilots to enter enemy territory. The CATS Hunter, Alpha and the Warrior would instead enter the enemy territory and carry out the attack if need be," Arup Chaterjee, who was former director engineering, R&D, HAL had said.

Could the Champions Trophy be the blessing in disguise Gambhir desperately needs?

The head coach and his support staff are under pressure to arrest a recent downward spiral and the second biggest 50-over ICC tournament after the World Cup offers them a shot at redemption and set the house in order for the man in the hot seat

GETTY IMAGES

R. Kaushik

One of the many advantages of being a player is the belief and the confidence that one can influence the outcome of a sporting contest. That might not always eventuate, because if belief and confidence alone were the decisive factors, everyone would succeed all the time. But at least the player has the opportunity and the means to make a difference, whether they can actually do so or not notwithstanding. That's a luxury a coach doesn't possess, because their job ends the moment the players step on the field. It's a reality that has now started to stare Gautam Gambhir in the face.

Gambhir has been retired from representative cricket for six years now, having last played for Delhi in the Ranji Trophy against Andhra in December 2018. He went out on a high, making 112 and helping his team secure the lead in a drawn encounter after Andhra had piled up 390. His last competitive game was much later, in the Legends League in December 2023. Between those two games five years apart, he was the mentor of Lucknow Supergiants in their first two tilts at the IPL, in 2022 and 2023, before reprising a similar role with Kolkata Knight Riders in IPL 2024.

Celebrated homecoming

Call it coincidence, or whatever, KKR broke a decade-long trophy drought last season, going all the way under the leadership group of skipper Shreyas Iyer and head coach Chandrakant Pandit. And Gambhir, of course. It was when the spunky left-hander was the captain that the Kolkata franchise won its first two titles, in 2012 and 2014. As homecomings go, this was right up there with the most celebrated.

Perhaps in May, Gambhir might not have been everyone's obvious choice to replace Rahul Dravid as India's head coach at the end of the T20 World Cup in the US and the Caribbean in June. Admittedly, despite his mentoring role, he didn't have any coaching credentials as such. But then again, what is the role of a coach in international cricket? It's not so much about the high left elbow or the forward press. A coach is more of a man-manager, a facilitator whose primary objective is to foster a good dressing-room environment and confer on his wards the tools that will give them the best chance to succeed. From all accounts, Gambhir met those criteria.

His appointment as head coach in July was met with great optimism but six months on, it can be said that that optimism has been slightly unfounded. A first One-Day International series defeat in Sri Lanka in more than two and a half decades, a first home Test series loss in a dozen years and a first Test series defeat to Australia since 2015 aren't the sort of results one would like on their CV, but that's where Gambhir stands early in his coaching career. Is he under external pressure to start delivering? Maybe not yet. But for a fierce competitor who hates losing and who doesn't know what it is to take a backward step, is he feeling pressure from within to arrest a disturbing trend and embark on an upward spiral? Without a shadow of doubt.

It's said, and not entirely without reason, that a coach is only as good as their team. But Gambhir's team isn't that bad, is it? After all, wasn't it just 14 months back that pretty much the same set of players entranced the cricket world by waltzing into the final of the home 50-over World Cup? More or less the same bunch that, 10 months back, rallied from losing the first Test to England in Hyderabad to complete the most commanding 4-1 triumph? And largely the same group that rewrote history six months back by winning the T20 World Cup in Bridgetown for the first time since 2007? India couldn't have gone from a crack outfit at the start of October, soon after their 2-0 annihilation of Bangladesh at home, to a rickety, hapless one at the start of January, right?

Difficult phase

And yet, the results would indicate a team in decline. From the middle of October, it has all been spectacularly downhill. India have lost six and won just one of eight Tests; three of those defeats came at home, three more in Australia where the last time India lost more than two Tests in a series was in 2011-12. Gambhir was a part of that showdown under Mahendra Singh Dhoni which Australia bossed 4-0. In some ways, he would have empathised with his two senior batters in Australia this time around. Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli had outings to forget, the captain making just 31 runs in five innings and opting out of the final Test, his predecessor scoring 100 of his 190 runs in one knock and being dismissed caught behind the stumps eight times out of eight. On his only Test tour of Australia, Gambhir himself managed just a solitary score of more than 35 in eight innings.

But empathising is one thing, getting them, and the rest of the batting group, to pull up their socks is quite another. At the end of the two-and-a-half-day drubbing in Sydney, Gambhir acknowledged that India's batting woes weren't exclusive to this series overseas, that they had also struggled on turning tracks against the Kiwis at home. Unless those woes are addressed quickly, the road ahead will be long, foreboding, arduous...

Transitions in sport are demanding periods that require patience and careful handling. India are extremely close to that phase and therefore Gambhir will perhaps get a longer rope when a break is made from the Rohit-Kohli Test era, whenever that is. But how long that rope will be is anyone's guess. It won't be fair to expect Gambhir to wave the magic wand and right the wrongs in an instant, but signs of progress must be visible and obvious if the national side is to retain the confidence and interest of the biggest stakeholder of the sport in the country, the unabashed fan.

Gambhir wasn't the first coach to bring his own support staff personnel to a team set-up. The 43-year-old didn't get Abhishek Nayar, Morne Morkel and Ryan ten Doeschate on board because they are his good friends, but because this bunch has worked together in the past, knows each other inside out, trust is total and implicit and has forged a style of functioning that has been both effective and efficient. But, as is inevitable when the desired results prove elusive, the focus will be as much on the support staff as the playing group and that's where these former internationals find themselves now.

Balancing act

Gambhir has to tread a delicate tightrope, planning for the future and working out a roadmap that involves restructuring without disregarding immediate results because that isn't a trade-off acceptable to the lay Indian fan. He has thrown his lot behind domestic cricket, thundering that whenever players are available, they must return to playing for their state, especially in the Ranji Trophy. Sometimes, that's easier said than done, especially when it comes to the fast bowlers. But for batters, it is imperative that they return to the drawing board, they re-familiarise themselves with Indian conditions - however silly that line might seem - and re-engage with playing quality spin, hopefully from time to time on surfaces that help the spinners, because that is an art that seems to be rapidly fading. Mitchell Santner and Ajaz Patel exposed India's technical failings against the turning ball. While packed calendars can sometimes preclude a return to state duties and the threat of burnout will mean reasonably careful monitoring, one suspects the days of cotton wool and blanket exemption from domestic cricket have already slipped into the past.

India's next assignment is the 50-over Champions Trophy, where they will play all their matches in Dubai. The second most prestigious ODI tournament after the World Cup, it will offer Rohit, Gambhir and the core group a grand opportunity to at least temporarily banish the dark clouds hovering over the Indian team. While the final 15 has yet to be named, India have the resources, the personnel, the nous, the experience and, dare one say, the fire and the hunger to leave an indelible mark on the competition. The proximity of the Champions Trophy to the debacle in Australia is certain to rule out far-reaching, knee-jerk decision-making, and a settled leadership methodology will only be in the team's best interests. Whatever squad India put out will be more Rohit's team than Gambhir's for obvious reasons, and the captain who has spearheaded the influx of an exciting brand of batting, primarily, will be determined to reiterate that he is far from a spent force.

Gambhir is reputed to be an uncompromising task master who doesn't think twice about cracking the whip, no matter who the person at the receiving end is. But there have been whispers of a lack of communication within the group, of a house divided, of the need for greater cohesion between the head coach and his talented wards. Again, these are all fallouts of negative results. If there is any truth at all to these whispers, they need to be addressed post-haste. Gambhir needs to be more inclusive and accommodating, the players need to reciprocate and be willing to take the hard knocks. At the end of the day, everyone is in it for the same reason, the same purpose, the same goal. Why not do it with a smile?

THE GIST

- His appointment as head coach in July was met with great optimism but six months on, it can be said that that optimism has been slightly unfounded
- Gambhir has to tread a delicate tightrope, planning for the future and working out a roadmap that involves restructuring without disregarding immediate results because that isn't a trade-off acceptable to the lay Indian fan
- Gambhir needs to be more inclusive and accommodating, the players need to reciprocate and be willing to take the hard knocks

From Page One

CID probe may lead to clash, says Horatti

"I will read the contents of the letter and then seek legal opinion from legal advisers and the Law Department. We will do whatever is possible within the legal framework. Our actions will have to be within the framework. Even Mr. Horatti will also have to give his judgements and decisions within the legal framework."

The government announced a CID inquiry to prevent any confusion and to dig out the truth, he justified. "We will not allow any tiff between the government and the Chairman," he said.

When his reaction was sought on the issue, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said that the Home Minister would respond to the letter.

Udders of three cows slashed in city

Housing, Waqf and Minority Welfare Minister, B. Z. Zameer Ahmed Khan, also the MLA for Chamarajpet, visited the veterinary hospital where the three injured cows are being treated and condemned the incident. "Those who have done this to mute animals do not deserve to be considered human beings at all," he said, adding he would personally buy new cows to their owner, as these cows won't be able to provide milk anymore.

Earlier in the day, after the incident came to light, senior police officials rushed to the spot and conducted a detailed probe into the incident.

The Cottonpet police have registered a case against unidentified miscreants under Section 325 (committing mischief by killing, poisoning, maiming or rendering useless any animal) of te Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, 2023. The police said there are no CCTV cameras that covered the exact spot where the cows were attacked. However, they are analysing footage from other CCTV cameras in the locality for leads on the attackers.

Why the attack?

A family member of the owner of the cows that were attacked, who spoke to presspersons, suspected that people who objected to the cows soiling the street may have committed the crime.

Residents of the area alleged that several groups of youths were consuming drugs openly, roaming around armed with blades and lethal weapons and often misbehaved with residents. "If any resident objected to their wayward behaviour, they are attacked and beaten up," a woman resident rued, speaking to presspersons.

However, Mr. Ashok claimed that these cows were used in a recent protest by Hindutva organisations against the Karnataka State Board of Auqaf taking over the land of a veterinary hospital, which may have been the reason for the attack.

INBRIEF

CCB unearths drug racket

The Anti-Narcotics Wing of the Central Crime Branch, Bengaluru City Police, busted another drug racket, and arrested two peddlers and seized 5 grams of Yaba tablets and 1.7 kg of ganja worth ₹3 lakh.

Based on a tip-off, CCB sleuths along with the Parappana Aggrahara police raided an apartment in Electronics City Phase-2 and seized the drugs. According to the police, the accused were selling drugs to college students and software employees. A case has been registered under the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, against the two peddlers.

Police mull cancelling Darshan's firearm licence

The Bengaluru City Police are now mulling on cancelling Kannada actor Darshan's licence to own a firearm. The actor is accused of murder and is currently out on bail.

A fortnight ago, the city police served him a notice to surrender his licensed firearm at the jurisdictional R.R. Nagar police station. However, the actor is yet to respond and hasn't surrendered his weapon yet, sources said.

The West Division police sent a request to the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Administration) a month ago, seeking surrender of the weapon.

The request was sent following the High Court of Karnataka granting bail to Darshan in the Renukaswamy murder case.

According to the police, as the accused is out on bail, there are chances that he may threaten witnesses using a firearm. Hence, the notice has been served for the safe deposit of the weapon.

Text & Context and Science

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (January 13, Monday), the following explainers are available:

- Should voter IDs be linked with Aadhaar? **newsth.live/aadhaarvoterxp**
- An unlikely mystery: studies shed new light on how genes are made **newsth.live/howaregenesmade**

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Gang of seven arrested for cheating businessman of ₹2 crore

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Halasuru Gate Police have arrested a gang of seven, including a woman, who duped a city-based businessman luring him to invest ₹2 crore with a promise to double the amount within a day.

The accused, who had set up an office at Cubbonpet, claimed to be representatives of a Malaysia-based company, OIA: Achithi Inchit Cedi Hchiz. The victim, a resident of Sunkadakatte, was convinced to invest ₹2 crore, with a promise that the company would return ₹3.5 crore via RTGS/NEFT within a single day.

Office visit

The victim then visited the company's office at Patel Enterprises in Cubbonpet and handed over ₹2 crore in cash as investment. The accused took the cash and left the office on the pretext of depositing the money at a different branch, said the police.

After waiting for hours and when the accused did not return, the victim realised that he had been cheated and filed a complaint with the police on December 11.

Caught at Majestic

Based on the complaint, the Halasuru Gate Police nabbed three of the accused within a few hours near the Kempegowda bus stand, Majestic, along with three mobile phones while they were about to flee the city.

Upon interrogation, they confessed to their involvement in the fraud and revealed that seven more individuals were part of the scam.

The accused have been identified as Shan Thomas, 59, an engineering graduate from Kottayam, Kerala and working in a medical shop; Jose Kuruvilla, 62, a BA graduate and real estate broker from Thrissur, and Jean Kamal, 45, an engineering graduate from Jaraganahalli, J.P. Nagar and working as a salesman at a medical store.

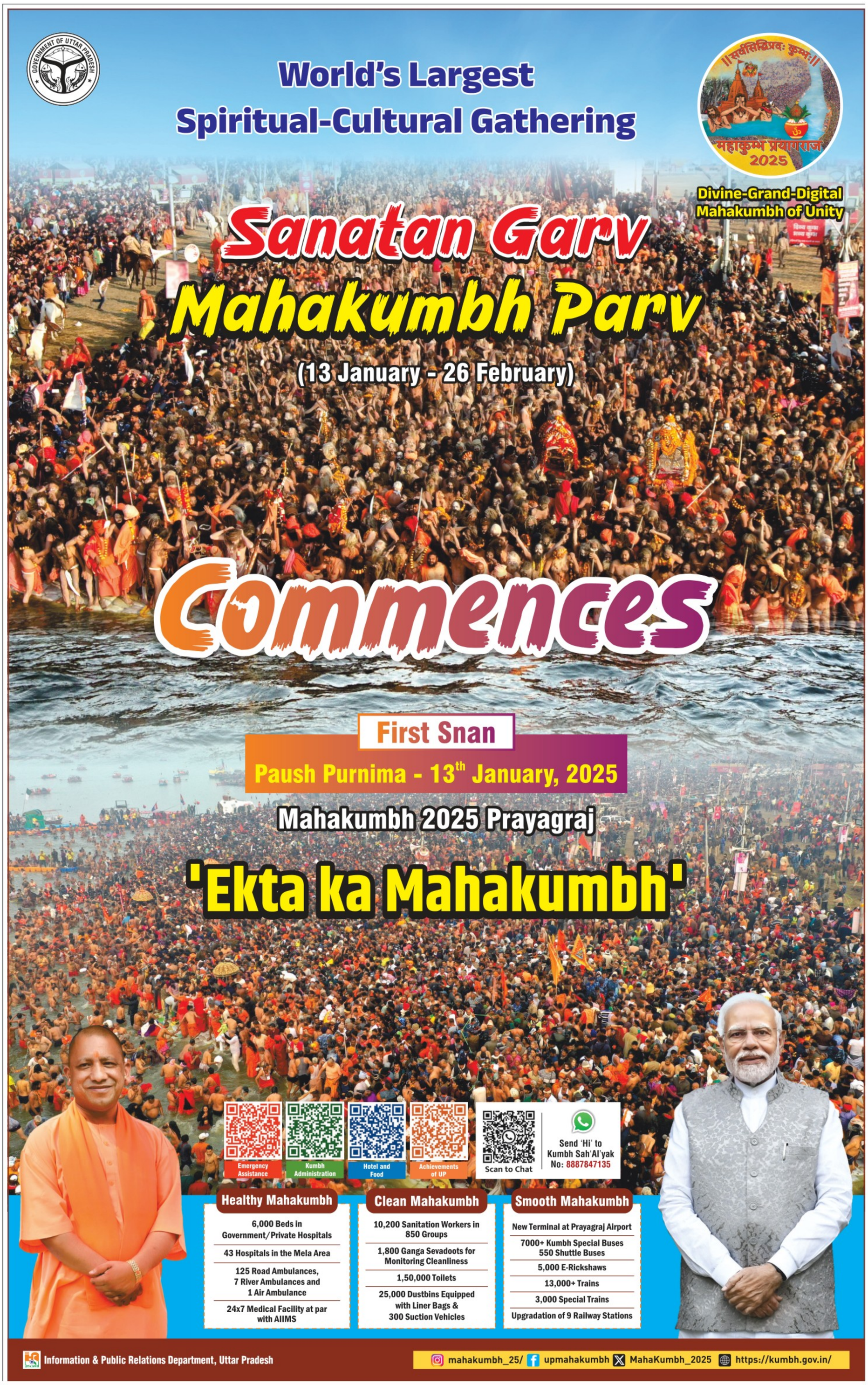
Based on their information, the police recovered five mobile phones, one currency counting machine, and ₹44.02 lakh from them.

The police produced the accused before the court and took them into custody to ascertain the details of the other accused who were on the run with their share of the money.

The police subsequently arrested Vijay Vaman Chempulkar, 45, an engineer from Mumbai and a contractor by profession; Urvashi Goswamy, 34, an engineer and contractor by profession, from Hennur; Jaffer Sadiq, 38, from Koramangala, and Amish Mahesh Gidwani, 40, from Vidyaranyapura, Bengaluru.

The other accused in the case including Kalyan Murugan and Vicky Ahuja from Delhi, Alpesh Patel from Gujarat, Panju Jabalpur from Madhya Pradesh, and Chandresh Patel from Gujarat are still on the run and efforts are on to track them down, the police said.

The police are now further investigating whether the accused have cheated others using a similar modus operandi.



An unlikely mystery: studies shed new light on how genes are made

In 1970, Japanese-American biologist Susumu Ohno proposed that the main source of new genes is gene duplication. When the body's genome has two copies of the same gene, one copy can continue to provide the original function while the other is free to mutate and acquire new functions

D.P. Kasbekar

The likeness of identical twins can be startling. They are alike because all their genes are alike. Genes are those segments of the genome where, if changes occur, the characteristics of an organism change. Non-identical twins vary in 50% of their genes and are much less alike. Thus, genes define our individuality in many ways.

In December 2024, two research groups addressed how new genes are created. The University of Nevada, Reno, group reported its findings in *Molecular Biology and Evolution,* and the other, from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology Plön, Germany, reported in *Genome Biology and Evolution*.

Each DNA molecule has two strands held together by bonds between compounds on the strands, called base pairs. Our genome contains 3.2 billion base-pairs. Representative illustration. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO

The 24 molecules

A group of 24 molecules of DNA gives identity to our 24 chromosomes. These are the chromosomes numbered 1 to 22 and the sex chromosomes X and Y. Our cells contain two sets of the genome: one derived from the mother's egg and the other from the father's sperm. Eggs and sperm receive only one chromosome of each pair. When they fuse and form the zygote, the latter has two sets again. The zygote then multiplies to form a baby.

The cells in human bodies possess two copies of chromosomes 1-22. Biological females have two X chromosomes, whereas biological males have an X chromosome and a Y chromosome.

Identical twins arise from a single zygote, while non-identical twins arise from two zygotes produced simultaneously.

Each DNA molecule has two strands held together by bonds between compounds on the strands, called base pairs. Our genome contains 3.2 billion base pairs. A gene is typically a few-thousand base-pair-long segment of DNA.

When a gene is 'expressed,' it means a cell will transcribe the underlying base pair sequence to a molecule called messenger RNA (mRNA), and read the mRNA like a recipe to make a protein.

In the human genome, there are 20,000 protein-coding genes and 20,000 genes that cells use to create RNA that influences the expression of other genes. There are also some genes, called promoters and enhancers, which tell the cell when and where other genes are copied into mRNA.

Two compounds involved in forming the base pairs are cytosine and thymine. Sometimes the cytosine molecules bind to a methyl ion and are said to be methylated. A methylated cytosine molecule is likelier than an unmethylated one to mutate and become a thymine molecule.

Duplications create new genes

In 1970, Japanese-American biologist Susumu Ohno proposed that the main source of new genes is gene duplication. When the body's genome has two copies of the same gene, one copy can continue to provide the original function while the other is free to mutate and acquire new functions.

Ohno's proposal was simple but had one flaw: it didn't explain how the organism's cells would deal with producing twice the quantity of the same proteins as a result. Protein over-expression can lead to debilitating conditions. The University of Nevada, Reno, researchers addressed this problem.

Humans and mice last shared a common ancestor 75 million years ago. The researchers compared genes duplicated in human or mouse genomes, those duplicated in both, and those not duplicated in either.

They found the promoters of duplicated genes had more methylated DNA than the promoters of genes that hadn't been duplicated. Increased methylation would have prevented the cells from manufacturing twice as many proteins, minimising the ill effects of duplication and allowing the duplicate gene to survive long enough to acquire new functions.

Cells possess two copies of chromosomes 1-22. Females have two X chromosomes, whereas males have an X chromosome and a Y chromosome

The researchers reported that the higher rate of methylation also elevated the rate of mutation.

Random sequences to incipient genes

The Max Planck Institute group inserted exogenous DNA into a population of cells derived from a human. (Exogenous means the DNA came from sources separate from the cells.) The researchers were careful to insert the DNA at a specific site in the genome and allowed the cells to make proteins with them.

The exogenous DNA had a chunk that consisted of a random sequence of base-pairs – which means the proteins the cells made with it would be random as well.

The researchers put together a collection of cells of 3,708 types and nurtured them for 20 days. At regular intervals they checked the relative abundance of different cell types.

After 20 days, the team found that 53% of cell types had become less abundant, 8% more abundant, and 40% didn't swing either way. That is, more often than not, random DNA sequences affected cell growth and thus became relevant for evolution to act upon.

In yet other words: the random DNA inserts behaved like incipient genes.

Keeping vs. chucking a gene

For a genome to retain a gene, it must have some use, or the genome allows it to mutate. But establishing a gene's usefulness is challenging.

Consider blood groups. Individuals can have one of four groups – A, B, AB or O – depending on which variants of the *ABO* gene they've inherited. If a person receives *A* and *A* or *A* and *O*, they have the A blood type. If they have *B* and *B* or *B* and *O*, they have the B blood type. If they have *A* and *B* or *O* and *O*, then they have the AB or the O blood types, respectively.

In sum, every individual lacks either one or two of the variants, which means no variant is really essential. The *O* variant also encodes a protein with no known function and whose amino acid sequence is markedly different from those encoded by *A* and *B*.

Primates and humans took different branches on the tree of evolution millions of years ago but share blood types – which is to say evolution both found a way and saw fit to retain all three variants in so many species for a very long amount of time.Scientists don't yet have a simple answer to why evolution has done this, but they aren't complaining.

(D.P. Kasbekar is a retired scientist. kasbekardp@yahoo.co.in)

THE GIST

A group of 24 molecules of DNA gives identity to our 24 chromosomes. Our cells contain two sets of the genome: one from the mother and the other from the father. Eggs and sperm receive only one chromosome. When they form the zygote, the latter has two sets again

In the genome, there are 20,000 protein-coding genes and 20,000 genes that are used to create RNA that influences the expression of other genes. There are also some genes, called promoters and enhancers, which tell the cell when and where other genes are copied into mRNA

Researchers found the promoters of duplicated genes had more methylated DNA. Methylation prevented the cells from manufacturing twice as many proteins, minimising the ill effects of duplication and allowing the duplicate gene to survive

Primates and humans took different branches on the tree of evolution millions of years ago but share blood types — which is to say evolution both found a way and saw fit to retain all three gene variants in so many species for a very long amount of time

BIG SHOT

African tiger fish (*Hydrocynus vittatus*) in the Okavango river in Botswana. Freshwater environments cover about 1% of the earth's surface but account for more than 10% of known species. In a new study in *Nature*, researchers assessed the status of 23,496 species of freshwater animals and found 24% of them to be at high risk of extinction. REUTERS

WHAT IS IT?

IMD: India's weather tracker

Vasudevan Mukunth

On January 15, 2025, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) will turn 150 years old.

The organisation was set up by the provincial British government in the country in 1875, and its first (Imperial) Meteorological Reporter was Henry Francis Blanford. The IMD's genesis can be traced to the importance of the monsoons over South Asia and the formation and effects of cyclones from the Indian Ocean.

Its formation was particularly accelerated by the 1864 Calcutta cyclone, which devastated the city and left more than 60,000 people dead, and the Orissa famine that followed just two years later because the monsoons had failed. So the government at the time decided to funnel weather data collected around the country into a single set of records, managed by a bespoke organisation. This organisation was the IMD.

It was originally headquartered in Calcutta but by 1944 had moved to New Delhi. In independent India, the IMD became a member of the World Meteorological Organisation in 1949.

Students taking part in an event to mark the 150th anniversary of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) in Chennai. ANI

The IMD currently operates six Regional Meteorological Centres, a Meteorological Centre in every State capital, plus a panoply of centres for various meteorological services. Aside from tracking and studying phenomena like rainfall and cyclones, the IMD helps record earthquakes and atmospheric pollution and generates alerts and warnings about impending anomalous weather. It also maintains a complicated communications system that collects data from a variety of sources, including ground observatories, naval vessels, atmospheric balloons, and satellites.

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NEET UG 2024
SHAILAJA S
2 Year Classroom Student
JIPMER PUDUCHERRY
AIR 38
715/720

JEE MAIN 2024
SAINAVANEET M
5 Year Classroom Student
IIT DELHI
AIR 41
Overall 100 Percentile
Karnataka State Topper

AIR 37 — JEE ADV. 2024 — ANSHUL G — 2 Year Classroom Student — IIT BOMBAY
AIR 30 — JEE ADV. 2024 — SAGAR V — 3 Year Classroom Student — IIT BOMBAY
AIR 15 — JEE ADV. 2024 — SHAWN THOMAS K — 2 Year Classroom Student — IIT BOMBAY
AIR 36 — JEE ADV. 2024 — VIDEEP R J — 3 Year Classroom Student — IIT BOMBAY
AIR 80 — JEE ADV. 2024 — ABHINAV P J — 4 Year Classroom Student — IIT DELHI

RANK 3 — ABHINAV P J — 4 Years Classroom Student — KCET 2024
RANK 5 — ANIMESH S R — 4 Years Classroom Student — KCET 2024
RANK 7 — VIDEEP REDDY J — 3 Years Classroom Student — KCET 2024
RANK 8 — SHAWN T K — 2 Years Classroom Student — KCET 2024
RANK 9 — KARTHIKEYA S V — 3 Years Classroom Student — KCET 2024
RANK 10 — SAGAR V — 3 Years Classroom Student — KCET 2024

NEET UG 2024
1025 MBBS Selections

IIT-JEE 2024
325 Students Got Into IIT Colleges

KCET 2024
34 Students in Top 100 Ranks

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A BG-BGE

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Workers rescued from building collapse at Kannauj station

28 The shuttering of the under-construction building on the railway station premises had collapsed on Saturday afternoon, trapping the workers. Rescue teams worked through the cold night to clear the debris and safely pull out the trapped workers. PTI

Adani's investment for various projects in Chhattisgarh

65,000 In crore. Adani announced a planned investment of ₹60,000 crore to expand the group's power plants in Raipur, Korba and Raigarh. He also committed ₹5,000 crore for the group's cement plants in the State. PTI

Number of workers who died in Pakistan's coal mine collapse

11 Twelve workers were trapped when the coal mine collapsed in the Sanjdi area, about 40 kilometres from Quetta in the Balochistan province, on Wednesday. In three days of rescue work, 11 bodies were recovered, with rescue workers still searching for the last worker inside the structure. PTI

Number of pilgrims expected to attend the Maha Kumbh Mela

35 In crore. Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh has said that 35 crore pilgrims are expected to attend the Maha Kumbh Mela taking place in the vicinity of Sangam — the confluence of rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati. 24 crore pilgrims visited the Mela in 2019. PTI

Number of civilians killed in Myanmar Junta air strike

15 A Myanmar junta air strike killed at least 15 civilians and wounded 10 others at a market in the northern Kachin state, a spokesman for an ethnic rebel group said. The junta has been accused of carrying out multiple attacks on civilian targets. AFP

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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Should voter IDs be linked with Aadhaar?

Why was the National Electoral Rolls Purification and Authentication Program launched by the Election Commission? How do already existing voters link EPIC with their respective Aadhaar numbers? What did the Supreme Court mandate in the Puttaswamy case in 2018?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan. R

The story so far:
The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have accused each other of manipulating electoral rolls before the Delhi Assembly elections. This has reignited the debate about linking voter IDs/Election Photo Identity Card (EPIC) with respective Aadhaar numbers.

What is the history of the proposal?
The Election Commission (EC) had in February 2015 launched the National Electoral Rolls Purification and Authentication Program (NERPAP). This was to address the issue of duplicate entries in the electoral roll and to remove such entries. In order to achieve this, the EC began authenticating EPIC data by linking it with the Aadhaar database. It had linked more than 300 million voters in a span of three months. However, the Supreme Court in an interim order, in August 2015, held that the mandatory use of Aadhaar should only be for welfare schemes and PAN linking. Following this order, the NERPAP exercise was discontinued.

After the Supreme Court's final order in *Puttaswamy* in September 2018, that upheld the constitutional validity of the Aadhaar Act, the EC sought amendments to the Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RP Act, 1950). The Parliament amended the RP Act, 1950 and The Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 in December 2021 to enable the linking of EPIC with Aadhaar. It provided the format in which Aadhaar information may be submitted to the electoral registration officer by a new voter at the time of fresh registration (Form 6: to establish identity) or an existing voter already included in the electoral roll (Form 6B: for the purpose of authentication). Any other listed document may be submitted only if the voter is unable to furnish their Aadhaar number because they do not have one. However, in order to keep these amendments voluntary in nature, the word 'may' have been used in the amendments. Further, the amendment also specifies that no application for inclusion of name in the electoral roll shall be denied and no entries shall be deleted due to the inability of an individual to furnish or intimate the Aadhaar number due to 'sufficient cause.'

Such individuals may furnish alternate documents like PAN card, Driving Licence, Passport, Bank passbook etc.

While the above amendments were challenged in the Supreme Court, the EC in September 2023 informed the court that submission of the Aadhaar number is not mandatory. It added that it is looking into issuing appropriate clarificatory changes in the forms introduced for this purpose. However, it may be noted that Form 6 and 6B have not been amended till date and they continue to seek the same details as before from the applicants.

The forms require the voters to declare that they do not have an Aadhar number to avoid providing the same.

Need to verify: A special camp for linking Aadhaar with voter ID card held in Madurai in 2022. FILE PHOTO

What are the pros and cons?
EPIC linkage with the respective Aadhaar number would definitely help in weeding out duplicate entries; that is essential. At present, more than 650 million Aadhaar numbers have already been uploaded in the process of finalising the electoral rolls. However, there are some concerns about this exercise that need to be considered.

Firstly, the errors in the Aadhaar database, however miniscule, may result in wrongful rejection or deletion of entries from the electoral roll. Secondly, Aadhaar is only a proof of residence and not a proof of citizenship. Thus, it may not help in removing voters who are not citizens from the electoral roll. It would require a separate effort from the EC.

Finally, while the linkage is to happen at the back end and a mere mention of the Aadhaar number on the EPIC/electoral roll may not by itself be a violation of right to privacy, it may still result in misuse as the electoral rolls are widely circulated amongst political parties.

What can be the way forward?
The right to vote is a constitutional right and declared so by the Supreme Court in various cases. It is part of the basic structure of free and fair elections and cannot be constricted through legislative action. Citizens are the most important stakeholders in a democracy and any electoral process should gain their confidence. There must be wide publicity about the benefits of linking EPIC and Aadhaar to clean up the electoral roll of duplicate entries, which in turn strengthens the electoral process. Any misplaced concern amongst voters about the secrecy of their vote being compromised because of this linking should be assuaged.

Meanwhile, the forms should be suitably modified without any delay, to reflect that providing Aadhaar is not mandatory, as per the submission of the EC in the Supreme Court in September 2023.

Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

- The right to vote is a constitutional right and declared so by the Supreme Court in various cases. It is part of the basic structure of free and fair elections and cannot be constricted through legislative action.
- The Election Commission of India (EC) had in February 2015 launched the National Electoral Rolls Purification and Authentication Program (NERPAP). This was to address the issue of duplicate entries in the electoral roll and to remove such entries.
- EPIC linkage with the respective Aadhaar number would definitely help in weeding out duplicate entries; that is essential.

What is different about small language models?

What led to the shift to small language models from large language models? What are the use cases for such models? Are they better than LLMs?

Poulomi Chatterjee

The story so far:
"We've achieved peak data," former OpenAI chief scientist Ilya Sutskever said onstage at the NeurIPS conference last year. "We have to deal with the data that we have, and there's only one Internet." Mr. Sutskever's comment comes amidst speculation that the speed of progress in large language models (LLM) was hitting a wall as scaling was reaching its digital end.

Why are smaller models in demand?
The race towards building large AI models has been building up ever since OpenAI released their 175 billion parameter LLM, GPT-3, in 2020. In the next three years, the company's LLMs further increased in size with GPT-4 trained on 1.7 trillion parameters. But, in 2024, researchers started to look at language models differently as scaling training data, scoured from the Internet, was giving marginal gains. The idea of building smaller language models emerged then.

This is evident in announcements made by Big Tech firms. Most of them released a nifty language model alongside their flagship AI models. Google DeepMind released Gemini Ultra, Nano and Flash models, while OpenAI and Meta launched their GPT-4o mini and Llama 3 models. Amazon-backed Anthropic AI launched Claude 3 and Haiku alongside its Opus.

What are the pros and cons of small language models?
Small Language Models (SLMs) are cheaper and ideal for specific use cases. For a company that needs AI for a set of specialised tasks, a large AI model is not required. Training small models require less time, less compute and smaller training data. French start up Mistral AI, an SLM provider, pitched its AI model to be as efficient as LLMs for specialised, focused applications. Microsoft released a family of small language models called Phi (the latest Phi-3-mini comprised 3.8 billion parameters).

Apple Intelligence, the AI system deployed in the latest iPhones and iPads, runs on-device AI models that can sort of match the performance of top LLMs. If LLMs are built to achieve Artificial General Intelligence (AGI), small language models are made for specific use cases.

How do use cases differ?
"Small language models are perfect for edge cases," said Rahul Dandwate, ML engineer at Adobe. "When I am using WhatsApp or any Meta application which is powered by the Llama 8B model, I am trying to learn a new language because its reasonably good at translation and other basic tasks like this."

"But they wouldn't do well at most benchmarks that large language models are measured against like coding or logical problems. There still isn't a small language model that's as good at solving more complex problems," he said.

We still aren't fully aware why this bottleneck exists. "But the best way we can understand this is just as human beings have brains with a massive number of neurons, a smaller animal has a limited number of neurons. This is why human brains have the capacity for far more complex levels of intelligence. This is similar to how small language models and large language models work," he said.

How does it work for India?
In a country like India, where the scope of AI adoption is immense but resources are constrained, the diminutiveness of SLMs is perfect. Another AI initiative from IIIT Hyderabad, Visvam, is building datasets from the ground up to build SLMs that can be used in healthcare, agriculture, education and to "promote and preserve language and cultural diversity through AI," their website stated. As the world of language model develops, it's not just enough to build frontier models from scratch. Sarvam AI's co-founder Vivek Raghavan said, "We want to build GenAI that a billion Indians can use."

THE GIST

- Small Language Models (SLMs) are cheaper and ideal for specific use cases. For a company that needs AI for a set of specialised tasks, a large AI model is not required.
- "Small language models are perfect for edge cases," said Rahul Dandwate, ML engineer at Adobe.
- In a country like India, where the scope of AI adoption is immense but resources are constrained, the diminutiveness of SLMs is perfect.

Makar Sankranti: Demand reduces for 'ellu bella' and 'sakkare acchu'

While the increased cost of materials and the lack of time to prepare them are factors, sellers also claim that many customers have cut down on the consumption of these items owing to health concerns

Akriti Duggal
BENGALURU

A few years ago, making *ellu bella* (a mixture of sesame seeds, jaggery, and groundnuts) was an integral part of Makar Sankranti festivities in many households. But, with the increasing cost of materials and the lack of time to prepare the mixture, many buy the mixture outside along with *sakkare acchu* (sugar candy).

This year around, regular sellers have noticed a dip in their sales.

People thronging K.R. Market ahead of Makar Sankranti in Bengaluru on Sunday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Wholesale markets

While many sellers also preferred to make *ellu bella* and *sakkare acchus* at their homes and sell them, off late even they are buying from wholesale markets owing to decreased demand and increased prices of materials.

Mohammed Basha of M.M. Condiments and Dry Fruits, at a market near HAL, said that he now chooses to buy *ellu bella* and *sakkare acchu* from K.R. Market and has stopped manufacturing it.

"The cost of making these items has become too high. Labour charges and ingredient prices have skyrocketed. Dried coconut used to cost ₹180 per kg, but now it's ₹300. White sesame is around ₹300 to ₹400 per kg, and jaggery which used to cost around ₹40 to ₹50 per kg has touched almost ₹100 per kg," he explained.

He also mentioned that while he previously used to sell 500 kg of *sakkare acchu* alone, now he stocks just 100 kg of *ellu bella* and 100 kg of *sakkere acchu*.

"I still get around 500 customers everyday but many have cut down on their consumption of these items owing to health concerns," Mr. Bhasha said.

People shopping for Makar Sankranti essentials at Gandhi Bazaar on Sunday. K. MURALI KUMAR

While *ellu bella* sells at around ₹150 to ₹160 per kg in various markets, the price of *sakkare acchu* ranges between ₹150 and ₹200 per kg depending on the designs. Manu of Sri Laxmi Srinivasa Homemade Condiments in Malleswaram continues to make both *ellu bella* and *sakkare acchu* at home. "I use sugar and milk to prepare *sakkare acchu*, shaping them into horses, elephants, and rings in colours like yellow, pink, orange, and white. This year, I've reduced production to 200 kg of *sakkare acchu* and 300 kgs of *ellu bella* because more people are buying online," he said. His stock of 200 to 300 kg sells out within seven days, attracting 200 customers daily.

> While prices in the market have increased, I still buy them because these sweets are an essential part of the ritual.
>
> **ASHA PRAKASH,**
> Resident of Banashankari

Suresh from Sree Prabhakara stores, also in Malleswaram, said that customers now prefer colourless versions of sugar candies and jaggery for health reasons.

Most customers have a preferred store to buy their yearly *ellu bella* and *sakkare acchu*.

Asha Prakash, a resident of Banashankari, said: "I used to make *sakkare acchu* at home, but it has become too tedious. While prices in the market have increased, I still buy them because these sweets are an essential part of the ritual."

Bangalore varsity allowed to hold BCom exams as per schedule from Jan. 13

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A file photo of Bangalore University.

The High Court of Karnataka, in a special sitting on Sunday, has given its nod for Bangalore University (BU) to hold exams for the first, third, and fifth semesters of BCom as per the schedule, from January 13.

A Division Bench, comprising Justice Anu Sivaraman and Justice M.I. Arun, passed the interim order while staying a January 10 interim order passed by a single judge, who had directed the BU to reschedule the exam dates that were overlapping the dates of foundation and intermediate courses held by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) for the Chartered Accountants (CA) course pan India.

Though the Bench said it should have been proper for the BU to considered the representations given by student-petitioners, who had sought for change of dates for the BCom exams clashing with that of ICAI, it said that the constitutional court had no power to reschedule the exams, which is the discretion of the varsity.

"The single judge's order of rescheduling the exams for five students, who have filed petitions, was not proper interference," the Bench said, while clarifying that the BCom exams would go on as per the original schedule.

Further hearing on the appeal filed by the BU has been adjourned till January 15.

S. Renu and four other students had filed petition before the single judge complaining that the BU did not consider their representation for change of dates of the BCom exams that were clashing with the CA course exams.

The petitioner-students had enrolled for the CA course conducted by the ICAI while pursuing their BCom at a private college affiliated to the BU.

The ICAI exams were scheduled between January 11 and 21. The ICAI issued the exam timetable back in September 2024, and the BU notified the exam schedule on December 13 with the dates overlapping with the ICAI exams, though the varsity was fully aware of the pan-India exam timetable of the ICAI, it was contended on behalf of the petitioners, who had submitted representation to BU in December 18 to change the exam dates.

Advocate Subramanya R, appearing for the students, has said that BU should have kept in mind the interest of students while fixing the exam dates, while pointing out that every year the BU exam dates overlap with the ICAI exams, which is a statutory institute created under the enactment of Parliament, adversely affecting a large number of students.

Meanwhile, advocate Siddarth Padmaraj Desai of BU though admitted that the varsity did not take any decision on representation of the petitioner-students, has pointed out that changing exam schedule at the last minute for five students would affect around 35,000 students of BCom course.

12-year-old boy killed in accident on his birthday

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A 12-year-old boy was killed on his birthday and his elder brother injured when a lorry knocked down their motorcycle on Hennur Bande Main Road on Saturday night.

The deceased has been identified as Bhanutej, a native of Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh.

He had come to the city to learn the Vedas and had been staying with a priest at a temple in R.T. Nagar for the past month, said the police.

According to the police, Bhanutej's elder brother Chakradhar had picked him up from the temple and the duo had gone to a relative's house in Horamavu for dinner, to celebrate Bhanutej's birthday.

On their way back, when they were passing through Hennur Bande Main Road, the lorry knocked them down from behind. Chakradhar fell down on one side of the lorry, and Bhanutej who was riding pillion came under the wheels of the lorry and was crushed to death, said the police.

Bhanutej

The victim and his brother had gone to a relative's house at Horamavu for dinner to celebrate his birthday

The lorry driver abandoned the vehicle and fled. Passers-by rushed an injured Chakradhar to a nearby private hospital where he is being treated.

The brothers' uncle Ravi has now lodged a complaint alleging that rash and negligent driving by the lorry driver caused the accident.

The traffic police have registered a case of causing death due to negligence, rash and negligent driving against the unidentified lorry driver and recovered the vehicle. Efforts are on to track him down.

Now, find sanitary pad vending machines in autorickshaws

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Did you get your period when you are outside and need a sanitary pad?

There is a chance that your autorickshaw driver would have stocked the vehicle with a few sanitary pads. Recently, Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy launched an initiative called 'Kshema' started by Sakriya Charitable Trust which has been working in the area of menstrual health, under which sanitary pads are made available in autorickshaws.

As a start, around 10 autorickshaw drivers, including Azzu Sulthan of Auto Kannadiga fame, have installed sanitary pad vending machines in their vehicles. The trust plans to extend this programme to more autorickshaws, especially those driven by women.

Mr. Reddy called the initiative a first-of-its-kind in the country. "These dispensers have been installed so that they can be helpful to women in need. If other companies or organisations come forward to expand this initiative under their CSR programmes, then we will support them," he told *The Hindu*.

While social media users expressed their appreciation for this initiative, women also said that such initiatives will remove the taboo surrounding conversations about menstruation.

"While our public and even office spaces are yet to take steps to make pads easily accessible, it is commendable that autorickshaw drivers have taken this step. Hope it extends to government buses and metro stations also," said Vaishnavi K., a private employee from Rajajinagar.

Bird census on Jan. 19 as winter migration peaks in Mysuru region

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Nearly a 100 waterbodies spread across Mysuru, Mandya, and Chamarajanagar will be covered by volunteers during the bird census on January 19, even as winged migration associated with winter has peaked in the region.

Around 50 volunteers will be part of the initiative and 21 routes have been chalked out to cover about 100 waterbodies spread across the three districts, according to Shivaprakash, a well-known birder who is leading the initiative and invovled with the exercise from its inception nearly 40 years ago.

This was also reckoned to be the longest running voluntary initiative pertaining to bird census as the exercise commenced in 1987 and was being held every year since then without a break, said Mr. Shivaprakash.

A positive fallout of this initiative is the voluminous and scientific data generated since 1987 which has helped in assessing the migratory pattern of the birds, the reason for decline or increase in their population, the status of their habitat etc.

Mr. Shivaprakash said they expected a decline in the total bird count this year, as the waterbodies were filled to the brim owing to above average rains.

Contrary to popular belief, an overflowing lake or pond is not preferred by birds of all species and the waders that tend to scour for prey in the shallow waters, would skip such habitats. Given the current situation of lakes, the number of migratory ducks are expected to be low.

A preliminary assessment based on general observation indicated the presence of 85 species of migratory birds in Mysuru region so far and their actual count would be known once the bird census was completed and the results tabulated, Mr. Shivaprakash said.

Some of the important waterbodies that would be covered during the census include Hadinaaru, Kalale, Sulekere, Kunthur-Kallur Kere, backwaters of Suvarnavathi, Kabini dam and Krishnaraja Sagar.

But with respect to the backwaters of the dams, only a fringe area would be covered where the birds are sighted in large numbers.

''The sheer extent of the backwaters of KRS or Kabini will make it difficult to cover the entire area," Mr. Shivaprakash added.

Hadinaru lake in Nanjangud taluk is known to play host to Bar-headed Geese which flies all the way from northern Tibet and Mongolia, soaring over the Himalayas.

They make multiple pit stops for refuelling and enter the plains of Karnataka in December.

Organic farming in Maharashtra to tackle farm crisis draws attention

B.S. Satish Kumar
BENGALURU

Neighbouring Maharashtra has attracted the attention of the country's agricultural experts for its novel initiative that has shown that organic farming could be used as a tool to tackle agrarian crisis.

An experiment that has been carried out in six districts of Vidarbha region, which had seen a series of farmers' suicides following agrarian crisis, is now being extended to the entire State following its success.

An experiment that has been carried out in six districts of Vidarbha region, which had seen a series of farmers' suicides following agrarian crisis, is now being extended to the entire State following its success. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"We have enrolled 9,600 farmers from the Vidarbha region under the organic farming initiative that commenced in 2020. Not a single agrarian crisis-related suicide has been reported so far among the families of these farmers as the initiative has turned farming into a remunerative venture. At the same time, suicides have continued among other farmers who have continued with conventional farming and who are not part of this project," Arif Shah, Superintending Agriculture Officer from Maharashtra, told *The Hindu* in Bengaluru.

Mr. Shah made a presentation on the organic farming initiative at a national convention on biodynamics in Bengaluru on October 23.

Though some individual farmers were into organic farming before the commencement of this project, that did not have much impact as there were no collective efforts, Mr. Shah noted. He said the idea was conceived in 2018 and the project began in 2020.

Titled as "Dr. Punjabrao Deshmukh Jaivik Kheti Mission", which later became "Dr. Punjabrao Deshmukh Naisraghik Kheti Mission", a total of about 12 lakh hectares of land has been brought under organic farming.

Many options

Farmers are free to choose any organic method of their choice from a list of options that includes plain organic farming, natural farming, zero budget natural farming, biodynamics etc. However, composting is the central theme of the project. The main feature of this project is that the government not only organised the farmers into various groups, but also guides them besides taking up capacity building through training programmes, he pointed out. There will be one farm inspector for 60 farmers and one master trainer for each Farmers' producers' organisation, he explained.

The trainers were first taught about organic farming and in turn, they trained farmers. The government not only supports farmers in input sourcing and management, but has also lent a helping hand in marketing by providing subsidies towards setting up market counters and procuring mobile vans. Each farmer-member has paid a share of ₹4.000 under the capital.

"Owing to pragmatic and collective measures, the input cost has reduced, the quality of produce has improved, and farmers are getting remunerative prices owing to branding their produce as premium," Mr. Shah noted.

In fact, there is an option of either going for bulk marketing or retail marketing depending upon farmers' choice and price situation, he pointed out.

While organic certification system too has been introduced to build the brand value, the farmers themselves have started producing bio-pesticides in the farm labs set up under the project, he explained.

In the next level, the Maharashtra government is planning to expand this project's scope to 25 lakh hectares by 2028.

Karnataka's potential

An official from Karnataka who participated in the event observed that the State had the potential to try such an experiment given the high demand for organic produce, particularly in Bengaluru. The city accounts for over 600 organic produce outlets.

CACHE

ISTOCKPHOTO

How the draft rules for implementing data protection falls short

Although the draft rules provide some guidance for implementing the DPDP Act, they lack detailed guidelines to help improve the lives of India's digital nagriks. The government needs to seek appropriate expert advice, conduct wide consultations, and clarify timelines for implementation

Jhalak M. Kakkar
Shashank Mohan

After a long wait of 16 months, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has released the draft rules for implementing the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP Act). These rules are open for public feedback until the middle of February. Various stakeholders, including civil society, academia, and industry, have been eagerly awaiting the publication of these proposed rules as they contain the baseline implementation framework of the DPDP Act.

The DPDP Act is India's first comprehensive data privacy law that applies to all spheres of commerce and industry. It lays down operational obligations for data processors, special protections for children, and rights for all users, and a body for grievance redressal called the Data Protection Board of India. At the time of release, the DPDP Act was criticised by civil society for not instituting a specialised regulator, not incorporating standard protections against government access to data, and excessive delegation of regulatory functions to the Central government.

Lack of detail

The draft rules propose operative guidance for critical mechanisms such as notice and consent to a user for data collection and processing, intimation of data breaches, collection of parental consent on behalf of children, data localisation measures, and the procedure for setting up the Data Protection Board. Although the draft rules provide some guidance for implementing the DPDP Act, they lack detailed guidelines to help improve the lives of India's digital *nagriks*. Let's illustrate some shortcomings from the perspective of two critical avenues that the DPDP Act seeks to introduce – rights of users and the protection of children's data.

User rights

The DPDP Act enhances the autonomy of users over their personal data by providing them with the right to access, correct, complete, update, and erase their data. The law leaves it to the corresponding rules for clarifying the manner in which users can exercise these rights. Unfortunately, the draft rules do not make it clear how users may make these requests. They simply state that users can make requests to data processors for exercising their rights by following the steps published by businesses. This is simply restating what the Act lays down in another language.

For example, as per the right to erasure, can users ask search engines to remove links to certain websites? Courts in India have frequently asked Google to 'de-list' certain links from showing up on its public search engine. The rules could have prescribed standards to clarify the mechanism in these situations such as requiring that users share specific hyperlinks for erasure.

Since the right to erasure may also impact a third-parties' online speech, the draft rules could have articulated certain modes or conditions for objection that data processors could make against such an erasure request. However, the draft rules do not bring out any such clarity.

Protecting children

Today children are increasingly using various websites on the internet including social media platforms.

To safeguard children, the DPDP Act obligates data processors to seek verifiable parental consent before accessing the personal data of children under the age of 18. The manner of obtaining parental consent was to be laid down in the subsequent rules. However, here again the draft rules fall short. There is no detailing of an exact mechanism for identifying children and collecting parental consent. The rules provide that data processors will need to adopt appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure parental consent is obtained prior to accessing data of a child. The rules focus on how data processors must exercise due diligence for checking that parents are identifiable adults. This is a simple rephrasing of what the law lays down in the DPDP Act.

The rules were required to lay down detailed procedures for how businesses are expected to verify the identity of parents. They simply lay down illustrations where parents could either point to their existing user details on a common platform, or prove their identity by providing details of any kind of formal identity, for example a government issued ID. Again, critical questions remain.

How will data processors identify parental relations, that is, that the adult proving their identity and providing consent is actually the guardian of the child? What if children lie about their actual age when accessing a website? What mechanisms do platforms need to put in place to gauge the veracity of an age claim? Indian families, including children, often share a single device to access digital services, how will businesses identify children in these cases? The draft rules do not provide any guidance to these practical implementation questions.

Despite a 16-month window for drafting and consulting experts for the framing of these rules, the MeitY has released a document that is vague, incomplete, and rushed. Typically guidelines are very detailed, account for consumer privacy, and provide operational clarity for businesses and data processors. Unfortunately, the proposed rules leave much to be desired.

The government needs to seek appropriate expert advice, conduct wide consultations, and clarify timelines for implementation, before finalising the rules that will form the back-bone of India's first data privacy law.

Jhalak M. Kakkar is the Executive Director and Shashank Mohan is the Associate Director at the Centre for Communication Governance at the National Law University Delhi.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

A quiz on the various festivals celebrated around India on January 13 and 14

V.V. Ramanan

QUESTION 1
Name the hill on the western ghats where the Makara Jyothi in honour of Lord Ayappa is lit during these period.

QUESTION 2
Traditionally a sprig of fresh *Curcuma longa* is tied around the vessel while making this dish. What is the common name of the plant and what is the dish?

QUESTION 3
Devavrata, the legendary warrior son of Shantanu and Ganga, decided to leave his mortal body on Uttarayan. How does one better know Devavrata?

QUESTION 4
In which State is the world-famous International Kite Festival held every year on January 14?

QUESTION 5
Simple one. What is the English equivalent of the Makara in the Zodiac?

QUESTION 6
Alanganallur, Avaniapuram, and Palamedu are places famous for which activity?

Visual question:
What is the name given to this temporary makeshift hut used during the Magh Bihu festival in Assam? ANI

Questions and Answers to the January 10 edition of the daily quiz: 1. This idiom means to endure with determination and originated from soldiers in the 19th century given this to bite down on to help them cope with the pain of an amputation. **Ans: Biting the bullet**
2. This idiom is named after this Greek king of the Hellenistic period. **Ans: Pyrrhic victory; Pyrrhus**
3. This phrase means to solve a complex problem in a decisive/ brute-force manner. **Ans: Cutting the Gordian knot**
4. This phrase connotes someone confronting the unpleasant consequences of her/his actions. **Ans: Face the music**
5. This idiom suggests the release of something leading to great problems or suffering. **Ans: Pandora's box**
Visual: Identify the English word/ idiom. **Ans: Juggernaut after the rath yatra of lord Jagannath of Puri. It means a force that cannot be resisted or controlled**
Early Birds: ViswanadhaRao Batchu| Rajmohan Velayudhan| A. Anand| Ankurjyoti Hatimuria| Prashansa Lohumi

KNOW YOUR ENGLISH

My friend is now under the pump

I watched his latest performance and was not impressed. It just left me cold

S. Upendran

"What's wrong? Why do you look so depressed?"

"I'm still thinking about the series against Australia! Aren't you sad about how we..."

"Asking the wrong person, I'm afraid. You know that cricket just leaves me cold."

"Cricket leaves you cold? Does it mean it doesn't interest you?"

"Very good! When you say that something leaves you cold, what you're suggesting is that it is something that doesn't excite or interest you."

"In other words, it's not something that sets your heart racing."

"I guess you could say that. Here's an example. People were raving about your favourite hero's movie. It left me cold."

"Nothing unusual in that. You're strange! How about this example? I love reading fiction, especially thrillers. For some strange reason, poetry leaves me cold."

"Better not tell your father that! He'll disown you. I love to listen to different kinds of music. But I like doing that at home. Live concerts leave me cold."

"Really? I quite enjoy them. But it takes some getting used to. Now, coming back to the cricket match. You know, when I..."

"As I said earlier, the game leaves me cold. Let's talk about something else."

"I'm not going to be talking about the game. The Australians used a strange expression while they were giving the commentary."

"That's to be expected. What was this expression?"

"It was one that I'd never heard before – 'under the pump'. The commentators used it often during the fifth test. For example, one of them said that batsmen from both sides have been under the pump. What does the expression mean?"

"It means to be under pressure. It also carries the suggestion that you have a lot to do in a short period of time."

"So, when you're under the pump, you have to work very quickly in order to finish what you're doing."

"And this adds to the pressure. Here's an example. My boss is someone who performs well when he's under the pump. Comes up with some really great ideas."

"The sponsors have him under the pump. They said that unless he loses five pounds, they'll not renew his contract."

"That's a good example! This must your cousin who's a model."

"That's right! With its stocks taking a big hit, my uncle's company has been put under the pump to downsize."

"I hope that doesn't happen. A lot of people probably depend on that company."

upendrankye@gmail.com

Word of the day

Diminution:
change toward something smaller or lower; the act of decreasing or reducing something

Synonyms: decline, decrease, reduction, step-down

Usage: *The tumour shows no sign of diminution.*

Pronunciation:
newsth.live/diminutionpro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /dɪmɪˈnjuːʃən/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

Timings
BENGALURU

MONDAY, JAN. 13	
RISE	06:45
SET	18:11
RISE	17:42
SET	06:08
TUESDAY, JAN. 14	
RISE	06:45
SET	18:12
RISE	18:42
SET	07:04
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 15	
RISE	06:46
SET	18:12
RISE	19:38
SET	07:53

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	28	22
Mysuru	28	17
Bengaluru	25	18

Bengaluru Today
26°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be cool with mist and haze. Day will be comfortable. Night also will be cool.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
25°C Morning will be cool with mist and haze. Day will be comfortable. Dry weather to prevail.

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THE HINDU
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Market-side entry at Yeshwantpur railway station fully reopened

Authorities have promised to address the traffic situation by streamlining movement and ensuring better management

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

After a wait of one-and-a-half years, passengers at Yeshwantpur railway station can once again use the market-side entry to access Platform No. 1. The Bengaluru division has reopened the entrance fully, complete with a newly revamped parking facility. However, despite the upgrades, commuters are facing significant traffic congestion at the entry and exit gates.

Closure of the entrance has facilitated the construction of several key amenities at the station. K. MURALI KUMAR

Railway officials confirmed that the entry, which was closed on July 18, 2023, for redevelopment, reopened in phases. Pedestrian access resumed in June 2024, and the entry was fully operational for vehicles from December 24, 2024.

The closure facilitated the construction of several key amenities, such as a 400-metre ramp connecting Yeshwantpur Circle to the station, a five-storey multi-level parking facility, offices for the Government Railway Police (GRP) and Railway Protection Force (RPF). However, the archway that will display entry and exit signs is still under construction.

Despite these improvements, mismanagement of traffic at the entrance continues to create bottlenecks, frustrating commuters. Pavithra Naik, a woman passenger, expressed her disappointment, saying: "Owing to the heavy traffic jam and lack of proper management, I couldn't reach the platform on time and missed my train. I thought this side entry will be better than the main entry, but this is worse."

Adding to the congestion, street vendors on either sides of the roads leading to the station further exacerbate the issue.

Another commuter, Lokesh H.V., said: "The road is already narrow, and now with vendors taking up space, it's becoming a nightmare to navigate the traffic and street vendors to reach the entry point."

Residents from areas such as Mathikere, R.T. Nagar, Dollars Colony, Sanjaynagar, Vidyaranyapura, Malleswaram, and Hebbal stand to benefit from the reopening, given the ease of access. However, the ongoing congestion has diminished the convenience that was anticipated following the redevelopment.

Authorities have promised to address the situation by streamlining traffic movement and ensuring better management near the entrance.

A railway official said: "We are aware of the traffic congestion near the market side entry and are coordinating with local authorities to improve traffic management for a smoother experience for passengers".

Police book family of five for cheating BDA

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Vigilance Department confirmed that the accused Anil Kumar Agarwal, and his family created fake documents to get the sites at Anjanapura and Banashankari

The Seshadripuram police have registered a case of cheating and forgery against a city-based businessman and four of his family members for cheating the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) by getting five sites using forged documents.

Though the incident occurred between July, 2001, and March, 2003, it came to light when BDA officials, based on a tip-off, assigned the Vigilance Department to verify the facts.

The department confirmed that the accused Anil Kumar Agarwal, and his family members, Sonu Agarwal, Ram Prathap Agarwal, Santhosha Devi Agarwal, and Snehalatha Agarwal, created fake documents to get the sites at Anjanapura and Banashankari. Rules mandate that one family can be allotted only one site.

The probe also revealed an alleged nexus and negligence on the part of BDA officials concerned for not doing due diligence and verifying documents before allotting the sites. The accused have not only cheated the BDA but also deprived other genuine applicants, the complaint said.

The accused have been summoned for questioning and efforts are on to get back the sites sanctioned to them, a senior official said.

Gig workers' unions urge Karnataka government to pass welfare law

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

Platform and gig workers' unions and experts have demanded that the Karnataka government pass The Karnataka Platform Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Bill at the earliest and not wait for the Central government to frame rules for the Code on Social Security (COSS), 2020.

Panellists raised their demands at a roundtable organised by the Department of Labour as part of the Indian Society of Labour Economics annual conference.

"The Centre introduced the COSS in 2020 and hasn't done anything regarding it since then. That is why several State governments such as Rajasthan, Karnataka, Telangana, Jharkhand, and Kerala have started considering their own legislations. Karnataka should go ahead with the Bill and not wait for the Centre," said Shaik Salauddin of Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers.

He further pointed out to *The Hindu* that the Centre is talking only about a social welfare scheme and the workers require more than that.

Representatives of various platform companies have demanded clarity on legislation. FILE PHOTO

"You see that the income of CEOs of these companies have gone up, while that of the workers have significantly come down. The government must therefore fix a minimum living wage applicable for all platform companies," he said.

Concerns

Vinay Sarathy of United Food Delivery Partners' Union pointed out that without a comprehensive legislation in place yet, gig and platform workers continue getting exploited.

He noted that concerns regarding minimum wage, equal pay for equal work, grievance redressal system for workers and hurdles in the path of workers to unionise should be addressed.

Balaji Parthasarathy, principal investigator for Fairwork India, termed it an "anomaly" that platform companies refuse to engage with workers' unions, but teamed up under the banner of NASSCOM and IAMAI and rushed to the government to push back when the draft Bill was introduced.

Terming the Karnataka draft Bill "by far the most progressive legislation", he said: "If at all the Centre is doing anything, they are providing only social welfare benefits which take a very narrow view to the problems of workers."

Representatives of various platform companies present at the roundtable demanded clarity on legislations and sectoral caps while levying the cess towards worker welfare fund.

"Labour is a concurrent subject and all platforms are looking for clarity. The State and the Centre look at contributions differently. Will there be duplication? We have been having these conversations for many years, and not having clarity puts us in a situation of not knowing what kind of conversation we should have with the State and the Centre," said Athira, vice-president - public policy and governance, Porter.

She also suggested that the State must take a nuanced approach to the Bill as the business models vary from platform to platform.

Rahat Khanna, chief executive officer, Swiggy, suggested that there should be a mechanism in place to ensure that benefits from the fund reach the workers. He noted that there are examples of similar benefits not being utilised.

MLC says no privatisation of Mysugar

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Ruling out the possibility of privatisation of Mysugar, Dinesh Gooli Gowda, Congress MLC, said the State government was committed to ensuring its functioning and protecting the interests of the Mandya-based sugar factory and farmers.

In a statement here, Mr. Gowda dismissed the misinformation about the possible closure of the factory and sought to reassure the farmers that the sugar factory will continue to be run by the government. He appealed to the public and the farmers not to pay heed to the misinformation. "Mysugar will not be privatised for any reason," he said.

The Congress, after it came to power, revived the functioning of state-owned Mysugar, which was running under a loss, by releasing ₹50 crore for it. Mysugar crushed 2.05 lakh tonnes of sugarcane in the last season.

This year too, the government-owned sugar factory had crushed over 2.01 lakh tonnes of sugarcane supplied by about 3,400 farmers. All the dues to the farmers had been cleared, he said.

Mr. Gowda also said the Congress government had waived electricity bill dues, amounting to a total of ₹52.25 crore.

Siddaramaiah: I welcome healthy criticism

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah along with Ministers K.H. Muniyappa, M.B. Patil , K.J. George, and Laxmi Hebbalkar, launching the website of the Press Club of Bangalore on Sunday. K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Stating that he would welcome healthy criticism and would correct himself based on it, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said if the criticism was just for political reasons, he would not care about it.

"The BJP that criticised our guarantee schemes has copied and announced them in different names. Despite that, it (the BJP) placed false advertisements during the Maharashtra elections that the guarantees in Karnataka have not been implemented. Today, journalism based on speculation is increasing. Journalists should work as the voice of the people. If possible, try to write the truth," the Chief Minister said after felicitating journalists with awards announced by the Press Club of Bangalore (PCB) here.

> Today, journalism based on speculation is increasing. Journalists should work as the voice of the people. If possible, try to write the truth.
> **SIDDARAMAIAH,** Chief Minister

The Hindu journalists among award winners

The Hindu's Digital Editor Subhash Kevin Rai was among the five senior journalists honoured with the Press Club of Bangalore's (PCB) Suvarna Mahotsava Award.

The Hindu's Senior Deputy Editor Nagesh Prabhu was among the 50 journalists who received the PCB's annual award for 2024.

Mr. Siddaramaiah said the biggest service of journalists to society is to report news based on self-conscience. "Do not try to sensationalise news or support superstition. What did you do after a crow sat on my car? Channels invited astrologers who predicted that I would not complete my term. Not only did I complete five years, but I have been re-elected for the second time. Now, tell me if the credibility of the channels came down due to the crow incident or not? We would have spoken something during dinner. However, the media writes our dialogue about things that we do not know."

BMTC launches first air-conditioned electric buses on trial

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) has introduced its first fleet of air-conditioned electric buses, which are currently undergoing trial runs.

Five buses, supplied by OHM Global Mobility, a subsidiary of Ashok Leyland, have been deployed on the route between Kempegowda bus station (Majestic) and Kadugodi (Whitefield), according to BMTC officials.

With this launch, the BMTC aims to replace its aging Volvo buses operating on the Vajra and the Vayu Vajra airport routes with environment friendly air-conditioned electric buses. This marks the first time the BMTC has added air-conditioned electric buses to its fleet.

OHM Global Mobility has been awarded the contract to supply 320 air-conditioned electric buses to the BMTC. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

OHM Global Mobility has been awarded the contract to supply 320 air-conditioned electric buses to the BMTC. These buses will operate under a gross cost contract (GCC) model, where the BMTC will pay ₹65.8 per kilometre. "The full fleet is expected to be delivered by March 2025," a BMTC official said.

The new buses are 13-metres long and feature low floors, making them accessible for individuals with disabilities. They are equipped with retractable ramps to facilitate easier boarding. As per the contract, each bus is required to cover 250 kilometres per day, amounting to 87,500 kilometres annually.

Four depots

To accommodate the new fleet, the BMTC has earmarked four depots: Depot 7 (Subhashnagar), Depot 13 (Katriguppe), Depot 18 (Whitefield), and Depot 25 (HSR Layout).

Passengers who have used the buses between Majestic and Whitefield expressed their satisfaction with the new fleet, praising the comfort and design of the seats, which feature integrated headrests.

Pramod Kumar, a resident of Whitefield, said: "The seats provide excellent support for the head, and the ride quality is good. However, I feel the suspension of the Volvo buses is better. Overall, it's a good start."

Another commuter, Kavya Rao, a daily traveller on this route, said: "The electric buses are quieter and smoother compared to diesel ones. It's refreshing to travel in a bus that is both modern and eco-friendly. However, I hope the BMTC will reduce the fare since these are electric buses."

Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan Group of Schools, Chennai

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The public and in particular parents seeking admission for their child into PSBB Group of Schools are hereby informed that the school does not demand or accept donations for securing admissions into the school.

No unauthorised monies for admission by subterfuge or otherwise is collected by the school under any circumstances. No person or agent has been authorised to solicit on behalf of the school in this regard.

There apparently, are some persons who promise admissions and are collecting money from people seeking admission of children into the school.

In your anxiety to get your child admitted into the school do not fall prey to such unscrupulous touts or persons known to you or otherwise claiming themselves to be close friends or relatives wielding influence with the school Management or Heads of Schools or ex-staff members, etc.

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Kindly note that the school does not entertain such unethical and illegal practices and the school shall not be responsible or accountable for any such payments made.

Management
Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan Group of Schools

Published by Nirmala Lakshman at No 19&21, Bhagwan Mahaveer Road, Bengaluru-560001 and Printed by C. Sridhar at Plot No. 13-D, Bommasandra-Jigani Link Road, KIADB Industrial Area, Bommasandra, Anekal Taluk, Bengaluru-560099 on behalf of THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD., Chennai-600002. Editor: Suresh Nambath (Responsible for selection of news under the PRP Act).
ISSN 0971 - 751X

Youth Cong. enrolment 'poor' in some Ministers' segments

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

As speculation over the leadership in the Congress continues, some party leaders are learnt to have complained to the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) against Ministers, including Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who failed to secure good membership for the Youth Congress during the enrolment drive in August/September last year.

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) sources said that in constituencies represented by the Chief Minister and some of his Cabinet colleagues, the numbers have been poor. "The data is being reviewed now and it shows poor performance of some Ministers when it comes to party matters."

Registration

A total of 24 lakh people were registered of which the membership of 10.64 lakh people has been accepted while the membership of 5.36 lakh people has been kept on hold. "The membership of those with identity card mismatch and other issues related to voter ID card has been kept on hold. A total of 7.05 lakh applications have been rejected on various grounds," sources said.

According to the data shared, as many as 1,095 people were registered in the Varuna constituency represented by the Chief Minister, while the numbers were 102 and 986 in Koratagere and Babaleshwar constituencies represented by Home Minister G. Parameshwara and Major Industries Minister M.B. Patil, respectively. Agriculture Minister N. Cheluvarayaswamy managed the membership of only 173 people in Nagamangala and Animal Husbandry Minister K. Venkatesh could get only 191 members enrolled in Periyapatna. Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Priyank Kharge has managed 475 people in Chittapur.

Amid growing narrative over leadership issue, CLP to meet today

Speculation is rife that an agreement over power rotation exists between the CM and his deputy

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A file photo of AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

Amid a palpable shadowboxing over leadership in the Congress, a meeting of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) is being held along with the meeting of Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) office-bearers on Monday even as senior Ministers continued to speak on the issue on Sunday.

Though it is speculated that political developments in the party are set to dominate the meetings in which AICC general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala will be present along with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, party sources said the leaders are to discuss the party event on the centenary celebration of Mahatma Gandhi chairing the Congress session in Belagavi, on January 21. Sources said it was likely that Ministers and legislators could be asked not to air their opinion on the leadership issue in public that could provide a negative optics on the government.

The CLP meeting is coming against the backdrop of intense public posturing by loyalists of the Chief Minister and other leaders over issues including leadership of the government and the KPCC as speculation is rife that a purported agreement over power rotation exists between the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister. Mr. Shivakumar has publicly claimed there is a rotation agreement. Dinner meetings of the Cabinet Ministers, including the Chief Minister, held over the last two weeks are being viewed as a part of the power struggle in the party.

Caste-based meetings

While it is expected that the miffed Ministers belonging to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities, whose planned SC/ST convention was asked to be cancelled, may raise the issue, Congress sources said the party is likely to allow caste-based conventions on its platform. "Party may not allow individual leaders to take credit or promote leaders in such conventions. It is likely that the Congress will allow caste leaders and organisations to use the party platform," sources in the KPCC said.

The source pointed out that the recently held OBC convention in Hassan was planned to promote Mr. Siddaramaiah's leadership by his loyalists, but was eventually organised on the party platform.

Debate continues

Meanwhile, when his views were sought on leadership, Home Minister G. Parameshwara told reporters in Bengaluru that all the leaders would abide by the decision of the high command.

"All of us will have to abide by the decision of the high command. I had said this in the past. It is good that even Mr. Shivakumar has said the same."

Dr. Parameshwara's Cabinet colleague, Cooperation Minister K.N. Rajanna, seen as a Siddaramaiah loyalist and a vocal Minister on the leadership issue, told reporters in Udupi that every party had factions, and that faction politics is good in democracy. "When the Congress was formed in 1885, there were factions. Factionalism may be more in one party or less in another. Every party will have factions." Mr. Rajanna also said the government formation requires 113 legislators, and that Mr. Shivakumar is also aware of it. The Minister also claimed that he had not sought to become the KPCC president, but was ready to take over if the responsibility was given to him.

Channagiri legislator Shivaganga Basavaraj also joined the leadership issue by saying that Mr. Shivakumar should have become the Chief Minister for five years. "However, due to political developments, the high command made Mr. Siddaramaiah the Chief Minister. When the chair falls vacant, we will claim the post (for Mr. Shivakumar), and Mr. Shivakumar will become Chief Minister."

Caste census report will be discussed in Cabinet: CM

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A Vokkaligara Sangha delegation called on Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar in Bengaluru on Sunday.

Amid opposition to the Socio-Economic and Educational Survey (caste census) by Vokkaliga and Veerashaiva-Lingayat communities, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday reiterated that the report would be placed before the Cabinet for a decision to implement the survey recommendations even as Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar said he would not allow "injustice" to any community.

A planned meeting on Sunday of the Vokkaliga community leaders to chalk out the community's response to the government's decision to bring the survey report before the Cabinet was postponed owing to logistical issues, sources in the Vokkaligara Sangha said. According to sangha president B. Kenchappa Gowda, the meeting was postponed to next week since senior community leaders, including Mr. Shivakumar, former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, and Adichunchanagiri Mutt seer, were not available on Sunday. "Though we hear that the issue would be discussed in the Cabinet meeting on January 16, it will not deter us from fighting," he said.

On Sunday, the Chief Minister told reporters in Vijayanagara district that it was natural that there would be both positive and negative opinions about the caste census, which had been conducted by spending ₹160 crore. "We have received the report and it would be placed before the Cabinet to decide about its implementation," he added.

Panchayat polls

Though Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil had indicated the issue being discussed in the Cabinet last week and the Chief Minister spoke about the Cabinet discussion, Congress sources said there was a possibility that the report would not be brought to the Cabinet till the completion of taluk panchayat and zilla panchayat elections. "The Congress could face a backlash from Vokkaligas and Veerashaiava-Lingayats if the survey is brought to the Cabinet before these elections," they said. An earlier attempt in October 2024 had to be abandoned owing to the byelections to three Assembly constituencies.

Meanwhile, Mr. Shivakumar after meeting a delegation of Vokkaligara Sangha representatives, told reporters in Bengaluru that he had asked the sangha to postpone the meeting on caste census. "I told the sangha officials to postpone the meeting as it will create unnecessary confusion. I also told them that I will talk to the Adichunchanagiri Mutt seer about it."

He said he had not held any meeting and that there was no need for it. "They (sangha members) had planned a separate meeting on caste census and I had informed them that I would not participate in it. They informed me that the meeting would be postponed," he said.

Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H.D. Kumaraswamy told reporters here that the Central government has already decided on the caste census, and that the State government should wait for the Central report. "The existing State-level caste census report is flawed. It was done more than 10 years ago. For how many years has the Kantharaj commission report been with the government? Beyond political rhetoric, Mr. Siddaramaiah has not done anything for the backward classes despite staying in power for seven years. If the State wants a new report, let them conduct a new survey," he said.

Seer urges devotees to eschew animal sacrifice

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

Dayananda Swami of Vishwa Prani Kalyana Mandali has urged the devotees taking part in the Chikkallur Sri Siddappaji jatra in Chamarajanagar district (from January 13 to 17) to eschew animal sacrifice.

The seer has written to the Deputy Commissioner of Chamarajanagar and the Superintendent of Police of the district to strictly implement the provisions of the Karnataka Prevention of Animal Sacrifice Act, 1959, as also the orders of the High Court of Karnataka which prohibit animal sacrifices in public and places of worship.

Chemical unit told to stop production

The Hindu Bureau
BELAGAVI

Deputy Commissioner K. Lakshmi Priya and chairperson of the District Disaster Management Authority has issued orders stopping production at a chemical factory following leakage of chlorine, at Binga village near Karwar.

Ms. Priya has issued orders for suspension of production till a safety audit is completed. The prohibition orders were issued to suspend production and the authorities were directed to take action regarding safety in the factory, conduct safety audit to prevent any untoward incident from happening in future, and submit a report to the Uttara Kannada District Disaster Relief Committee, said a release.

On Saturday, chlorine leaked from a unit of Aditya Birla Grasim Industries Ltd. at the village, causing 19 people to fall ill.

JD(S) to elect its State unit president by April

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Janata Dal (S) will elect its new president for the State unit through an election by April this year.

"A decision has been taken to elect the new president through polls by April. I have told our leaders to focus on strengthening the party and give priority to those who are sincerely working for it," Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H.D. Kumaraswamy, who is also the incumbent president of the State unit, told reporters here on Sunday after a meeting of party leaders.

> I have told our leaders to focus on strengthening the party and give priority to those who are sincerely working for it.
>
> **H.D. KUMARASWAMY,** JD(S) State president and Union Minister

He also said that there had been no leadership vacuum since he was devoting time between factory visits, working in Delhi, constituency work in Mandya, and party organisational activities. The Union Minister also lashed out at the State government for not initiating measures to get compensation to some of the farmers who lost their land for the Bengaluru-Mysuru Infrastructure Corridor Project of NICE.

Party supremo and the former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda said that the Congress was attempting to weaken Mr. Kumaraswamy, and that the "Congress's dream to weaken him will not come true".

He said: "The Congress believes that if they can finish off Mr. Kumaraswamy, the JD(S) will collapse. But they cannot succeed since there are lakhs of party workers standing firmly behind Mr. Kumaraswamy." Stating that he would tour the State in March, the former Prime Minister said that the party had capable leaders and dedicated workers, and that it was impossible for others to destroy Janata Dal (S).

CORRIDORS OF POWER

'Commission' takes centre stage again

The allegations of "commission" have once again begun taking centre stage in Karnataka politics. The Congress, which secured power in 2023 after levelling a "40% commission" allegation against the then BJP government, is now facing the charge of what the Opposition calls "60% commission". Leading from the front is Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H.D. Kumaraswamy (*in picture*), who has alleged that "commission has reached 60%" in the government for release of funds to government contracts.

Responding to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's poser to the Opposition leader to provide documents to justify the alleged 60% kickbacks, BJP and JD(S) leaders shot back and asked whether Congress leaders produced any proof to justify their charges earlier.

Remark continues to resonate

Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar's comment in the Legislative Assembly in Belagavi that the ministerial post did not come to him easily in the S.M. Krishna government and that he got the post by "kicking the door", is said to have become a major topic of discussion during the dinner meeting on the eve of the New Year held at Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi's residence. Speaking privately, several Congress leaders complained that Mr. Shivakumar's remark had not gone down well in the party circle.

Apparently, his body language and lack of consensus approach would become a major drawback to his political career.

While offering homage to Krishna, Mr. Shivakumar recalled the formation of the Congress ministry in 1999 and said he had virtually fought to get the ministerial post. Now, Mr. Shivakumar, who has been aspiring to become the Chief Minister, is doing temple rounds and demonstrating his loyalty to the party's central leaders, apparently in the hope of getting the top job. Intermittently, he has also been issuing statements challenging the local leadership and claiming he does not need anyone's support and that he would work as per the party wishes.

Taste of one's own medicine

During an informal chat, in the backdrop of the Hubballi-Dharwad bandh held to register a protest against Union Home Minister Amit Shah's alleged derogatory statement against B.R. Ambedkar, a BJP leader took pains to explain that Mr. Shah was being misrepresented.

He said the Union Minister never meant to insult Ambedkar and his actual statement was a longer one. Instead of the full video clip, an edited video had been put into circulation to politicise the issue and to influence the innocent Dalits, he argued. When a reporter pointed out that the BJP, which has a well-oiled IT cell, was being given a taste of its own medicine by the Congress, he only had a sheepish smile in response.

Nagesh Prabhu
Girish Pattanashetti

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
TAMIL NADU CONSUMERS' CO-OPERATIVE FEDERATION LTD.
No 29/2 Arcot Road Saligramam Chennai - 600093 Email ID: tanco93@yahoo com
E-TENDER NOTICE
E-TENDER NO: TNCCF/ET/2024-2025/02/02 DATE: 11.01.2025
Tamil Nadu Consumers Cooperative Federation invites online electronic all india tender for **"Purchase of 600 Metric Tons of Double Roasted Rava 1 kg Packets, 460 Metric Tons of Samba Rava 1 kg Packets and 540 Metric Tons of Semiya (Vermicelli) 200 gram Packets for The Chief Minister's Breakfast Scheme.** Complete E-TENDER document can be viewed and downloaded through **https//tntenders.gov.in** and also available in **nicgep/app** free of cost **from 13 .01.2025, 11.30 A.M onwards.**
The bidders have to participate online bidding only with Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) of Class-III.
Last Date and Time for Online Submission: **29 .01.2025 Upto 10.30 A.M.**
DIPR/161/TENDER/2025 MANAGING DIRECTOR

ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, VIJAYPUR, JAMMU - 184120
(A Central Autonomous Body under PMSSY, MoH&FW, Government of India)
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All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Vijayapur, Jammu invites Online applications from Indian Citizens as per Govt. of India Residency Scheme, for the tenure posts of Senior Residents / Senior Demonstrators for a maximum period upto 3 years. The details are given below:

Dates for online Registration	
Opening of Online Application form	11.01.2025 (Saturday)
Closing of Online Application form	31.01.2025 (Friday)

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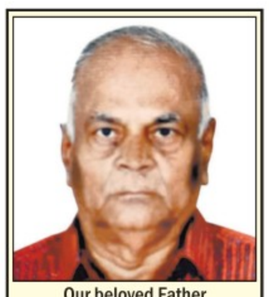
For & on bahalf of ED & CEO, AIIMS, Jammu

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

P. Parthasarathy (79), Retired Assistant Engineer (Comp), The Hindu, Chennai passed away on 12.01.2025. Address: No: 130, Annai Sathya Nagar, 5th Cross Street, Ramapuram, Chennai - 600089. Ph: 9445615395



Our beloved Father
D. GOPALAKRISHNAN (80)
(Retired Deputy General Manager, Central Bank of India)
attained Aacharyan Thiruvadi on 12th January, 2025
Deeply mourned by
his Wife, two Daughters, Sons-in-law and Grandsons
Ph: 9561001598

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DONATE EYES - GIFT SIGHT

Whose city? Whose *keres*? Mapping the State-backed evictions of lake communities

When the city's topography changed, what also parallelly emerged was a spate of 'ecological evictions' of those who lived on Bengaluru's keres, for real estate gains and to satisfy urban imaginations

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

From more than 1,000 at a point of time, Bengaluru's *keres* or lakes have come down to around 200. In place of Dharmambudhi Lake stands today the Majestic Bus Terminal. The Sampangi Lake gave way to Kanteerava stadium. HSR Layout, which is today the address of some of the biggest start-ups in the country, stands on top of what was once Parangipalya Lake.

When the city's topography changed, what also parallelly emerged was a spate of 'ecological evictions', or in other words, the eviction of those who lived on Bengaluru's keres, for real estate gains and to satisfy urban imaginations. And to legitimise these dispossessions, the state and judiciary have often resorted to environmental concerns, argues Achintya Anita Gurumurthy, a former research fellow at NCBS, who recently spoke at 'Research Talks' held by NCBS.

Doddakallasandra Lake on Kanakapura Road in Southern Bengaluru. K. MURALI KUMAR

Achintya Anita Gurumurthy points out how several parts of the city got inundated lately during monsoon as one of the prime indicators of the extent of real estate encroachment of lakes and their associated ecosystems. K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

City's unique case

While such evictions happen across the country, Bengaluru's unique history with its lakes makes it a very specific kind of case, says Gurumurthy.

"We see that there is a phenomenon of ecological evictions which is happening across the country. Residents' Welfare Associations and largely bourgeoisie groups in the city rely on the environment as a discourse to evict people from the places where they have been staying. But Bengaluru is a very specific kind of case because it has a very specific history with its keres, lakes and tank ecology."

On one side a narrative terming the lake dwellers as encroachers and illegal immigrants is deployed to legitimise the evictions; on the other side is the neoliberal imagination of Bengaluru as an emerging global city that is very important to the economic ambitions of the country, and therefore there is an inner-driven need to maintain a particular image for the city, Gurumurthy points out.

Achintya Anita Gurumurthy

Constant relocation affects the slum-dwellers' claim to the land, says Gurumurthy. FILE PHOTO

Elite sensibilities

The elite sensibilities which seek to preserve the image of the city in a certain beautified and sanitised way can be seen in the form of upper-class environmental groups who often deride slum dwellers as 'polluting', 'lazy', 'disease-ridden' and so on. And importantly, more than often, it is seen that courts overwhelmingly side with the former, says Gurumurthy who has been relying on NCBS archive materials for her study.

Cities in the global south, especially in India, are rarely planned settlements. Encroachments are rampant. How several parts of the city have been inundated lately during monsoon is one of the prime indicators of the extent of real estate encroachment of lakes and their associated ecosystems. However, the law often takes a stand of policing subaltern informality while simultaneously valorizing elite informality, says Gurumurthy.

She takes examples of cases such as Poojari Peddana v State of Karnataka, Farida v Commissioner, B. Krishna Bhat v Karnataka and so on to highlight the court's approach to those who live on tank beds.

"In Poojari Pedanna v state of Karnataka, the court says the hutment dwellers and slum dwellers on the land in question and the construction labourers from North India are causing a nuisance, and hostel inmates nearby are facing threats every day from slum dwellers...There is a particular hatred towards the slum, but the court is also castigating them in very particular ways - centring upper caste and class anxieties."

Gurumurthy also throws light on the loss of knowledge systems as a consequence of displacement. The intrinsic relationship between Bengaluru's lakes and the communities who live near them has been highlighted by anthropologists and ecologists multiple times. Historically, the function of those who lived near lakes involved maintaining the lakes and water management for irrigation and other purposes.

"But what we see is that through cycles of migration and displacement, this knowledge is being lost," Gurumurthy says.

Citing scholar Janaki Nair and her book *Promise of a Metropolis*, she notes how people who lived on Sampangi tank for generations took part in the construction of Vidhan Soudha, one the proud symbols of the city, and how the same people who helped erect it were later evicted and resettled by the government.

"They were resettled into Byrasandra tank bed which is one of the biggest slums today - Tilak Nagar slum area," she notes. While resettlement may look like a valid solution, it comes from a very superficial understanding of the problem.

"When you look at a slum, there are a lot of facets of life associated with it. That could be affordable public transport, easy accessibility to one's workplace and so on. The slum has a particular collective and cultural life of itself. So, when the state carries out the task of rehabilitation, they have to ensure that the bundle of rights that existed when they were originally inhabiting a particular space, continues to exist."

Colonial baggage

According to Gurumurthy, archival materials show that a large portion of the city today is situated on critical structures that once helped water to flow. A lesser observed aspect is the colonial baggage in the voices of ecologists in the State.

She takes the example of the Green Belt declared in the 1980s. The idea proposed by ecologist Yellappa Reddy was to encircle the urban area of a city with a green belt of land zoned for fields, forests and so on, and thereby prevent indiscriminate outward growth of the city and reap environmental benefits.

But the city grew and in the 1990s relaxations and deregulations came into effect allowing exceptions for industries, resorts and so on. "We are familiar with the argument that environment should remain free from human interventions. This comes with the baggage of a colonial way of thinking which held hatred towards those who dwelled in the forest and criminalised their work. We see that kind of baggage within Yellappa Reddy's work too," she notes.

Gurumurthy resorts to archival material such as ESG papers to argue that the largest encroachers in the city are not slum dwellers. but the state, real estate and private entities. "There is very clear evidence that there is a move under the name of lake conservation to privatise and individualise lakes," she says.

Involving locals

Citing the ESG papers and maps at the Archives she points out private apartments are located in the buffer zones of several lakes. Noting that the constant relocation affects the slum dwellers' claim to the land, she also brings up a pattern of communalisation that's in tandem with the privatisation of lakes.

Then comes the threat to the cultural fabric of the city itself. The plan to 'redevelop' Cubbon Park under the Smart City project in 2020 had received widespread criticisms from various factions within the city.

Citing one of the petitions by Environment Support Group, Gurumurthy says, "In the petition, they say that it disrupts not just the wetland ecology, but the cultural life surrounding the wetland ecology of Bengaluru. This is likely to fundamentally alter the ecology of the park, as activity undertaken is in modifying the canal leading into what was the Sampangi Lake, of which only a vestigial remains as a Kalyani. This Kalyani plays a crucial role in the syncretic Karaga festival that is unique to Bangalore."

Deriving potential solutions also from the Archives, she argues how it is pertinent to have people with local knowledge and communities associated with lakes in decision making committees. "The other solution is local self-governance," she adds.

State start-ups make it to the final list of TechXpedite Accelerator Programme

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

TechXpedite offers start-ups a comprehensive support ecosystem, including masterclasses. GETTY IMAGES

Games24x7, today announced the cohort for its ongoing accelerator programme, TechXpedite, featuring 17 promising start-ups from across the country including six from Bengaluru.

Launched in Bengaluru in October 2024, TechXpedite has received an overwhelming response, with more than 330 start-ups applying across three focus categories: gaming, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and impact-driven inclusive technology. From this impressive pool, 17 promising start-ups have been selected for an intensive accelerator programme, designed to accelerate their growth and market impact.

According to a press release, six of the selected start-ups in the AI category are from Karnataka, reflecting the vibrant and booming entrepreneurial spirit in the state. These are Arficus, Cairovision, Chittoo.com, Noha.ai, Spoda and Zeuron.ai. Dr. Ekroop Caur, Secretary, Department of Electronics, IT, BT, and S&T, Government of Karnataka, said, "We remain committed to supporting initiatives that drive technological advancements and foster sustainable economic growth—not just within the state, but across the country."

The selected start-ups are now participating in a structured mentorship programme where they will interact with industry leaders, venture capitalists, and domain experts to address challenges and refine their products and solutions.

TechXpedite offers start-ups a comprehensive support ecosystem, including masterclasses, networking opportunities, guidance from industry experts, and credits worth over U.S. $500,000 from more than 30 technology partners.

Mask sales surge in Bengaluru amid concerns over HMPV

Parents, students and schools are taking proactive measures to protect themselves

Akriti Duggal
BENGALURU

The recent increase in Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) cases has led to a noticeable surge in masks sales in the city, with medical stores reporting around 50% rise in demand compared to last month.

Store owners attribute the surge in mask usage to heightened awareness about HMPV, coupled with a lingering caution from the COVID-19 pandemic. This is despite doctors allaying fears about HMPV.

The growing concerns about the virus have been particularly evident in educational institutions and public spaces AFP

Concern over children

"I mainly see women coming with their children to buy masks as they don't trust the environment in schools. There has been almost a 50-60% increase in demand for masks this month compared to last month. Around 60-70 packets are sold every day, and we had to order new stock as well. We order around 200 packets every week," said Niam Ahmed, store manager at Dawa Dost, Shivaji Nagar.

At Lion Airport City Medical in Marathahalli, store manager V. Prakash revealed that 25-30 mask packets are sold daily, including at least two N95 packets. He says this is 50% more than last month. "Most of our customers are aged between 25-60 years. Normal masks are priced at ₹5 each, while N95 masks are priced at 50 rupees, said Prakash.

Increasing concerns

While surgical masks are sold at ₹10 per piece, N95 masks are priced ₹50-80 each.

The growing concerns about the virus have been particularly evident in educational institutions and public spaces. Several schools advised using masks and issued advisories to parents, recommending that students showing symptoms of cough or cold should remain at home.

"Students are advised to (1) be retained at home if they display any signs of illness, which includes running nose, cough, etc (2) should wear a mask if they have had exposure to any person/s who have displayed symptoms of illness. We should like each family to be responsible for preventing the rampant spread of HMPV," read a mail from the principal at a school in Whitefield.

As caution

In colleges too, masks seem to be regaining popularity. Ishani Gambhir, a student at Christ University, shared, "I don't leave home without a mask, especially in the metro. It's better to be cautious."

WhatsApp groups of apartment residents, meanwhile, have become active in discussions around the virus and concerns regarding health of children.

While some residents expressed hesitation to send their children to play without wearing masks, others shared how they restarted wearing masks to office since last week.

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 13, 1975

Havanur Suspended From Congress

Bangalore: Mr. L.G. Havanur, Chairman, Backward Classes Commission, constituted by the Karnataka Government has been suspended from the primary and active membership of the Congress party for his act of indiscipline, according to a press note issued by the General Secretary of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee, Mr. Jaffar Sheriff.

Mr. Havanur had also been served with a notice to show cause within two weeks as to why he should not be expelled from the party, the press note said.

In a press statement yesterday, Mr. Havanur had accused the KPCC president, Mr. K.H. Patil of "ganging up with anti- Devaraj Urs's forces. He had also alleged that Mr. Patil did not want the Congress Government to continue in Karnataka and he was making efforts to liquidate both the Congress party and the Government.

Cotton Seed Price: Minister's Assurance to Growers

Bangalore: Efforts were afoot for encouraging the cultivation of Varalakshmi cotton since it would relieve the drain on foreign exchange, said Mr. N. Chikke Gowda, Agriculture Minister, addressing hybrid seed growers in Chitradurga today. The meeting was organised by the District Association of Cotton seed growers.

The Minister assured the cotton seed growers that the Government would never disappoint the farmers in fixing the procurement rate and would announce its decision within a week.

CITYBEATS

Festive specials

ONGOING
A Sankranti Special Handicrafts exhibition-and-sale called The Souq Market is currently underway. Visitors will find a vast range of handicrafts, textiles, home decor, and crafts created by Indian artisans hailing from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, with a range of handcrafted jewellery.
At Chitrakala Parishath, till January 19.

Lohri on your plate

ONGOING
Lohri is a celebration of warmth, togetherness and new beginnings amidst bonfires and fresh harvests from the farms. To celebrate Lohri, Café Delhi Heights has introduced signature Punjabi dishes such as *makki ki roti* and *sarson ka saag* that celebrate the flavours of this festival.
Available till January 14 across all Cafe Delhi Heights outlets.

Welcome Veganuary

JANUARY 18, 19
Namu Recommends presents the Veganuary Festival 2025, which brings together community, entertainment and education with sessions on yoga and fitness, cooking demonstrations, panel discussions and more. Around 110 curated stalls will cater to you and your pet's vegan needs.
At Chamara Vajra, Bengaluru. Open to all, including pets.

Bengaluru in 80 stories

BANGALOREAN celebrates the city's spirit, featuring striking photos and candid narratives

This is us Snapshots from the *BANGALOREAN*, Kaveri Sinhji and Tania Singh Khosla (below). SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Praveen Sudevan

Bengaluru of today, in some ways, is a city of contrasts, where ancient temples stand in the shadow of gleaming tech parks. It straddles the old-world charm of its pensioners' paradise moniker and the bustling energy of its Silicon Valley aspirations. To tell the story, or rather, the multiple stories of the city and its people, Kaveri Sinhji, a social anthropologist and Tania Singh Khosla, a designer, have spearheaded a book, *BANGALOREAN*. Melissa Parkerton and Farrah Gillani wrote it, and the photographs were taken by Katya Antoni and Chris Page.

The book, released earlier this month, is a culmination of candid conversations, striking portraits, and a palpable sense of belonging. Over 80 people, including autorickshaw drivers, royalty, tech entrepreneurs, social workers, and artisans, are featured in the 340-page book.

A serendipitous project
The genesis of *BANGALOREAN* was organic, almost serendipitous. "When we set out, we didn't call the project *BANGALOREAN*. That name came later," Kaveri recounts. Initially, she envisioned an anthropological work – no photographs, just written profiles.

A chance encounter with photographer Katya Antoni, however, changed everything. Katya's images captured during a walk through Dhobi Ghat were so evocative that Kaveri invited her to join the project. "It was only after discussing with Tania that we realised we didn't even know what to call this project. The name *BANGALOREAN* came after everything was over."

Kaveri speaks with fondness about the diverse individuals featured in the book. "VIPs were actually easier to get for me than CB Venkat Raju, who's shy and introverted and doesn't want the limelight," she says. High-profile names like Narayana Murthy and Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw were surprisingly accessible. "They are where they are for a reason, right? It was easy to get an appointment, go there, and get an interview."

Preparation was key. The team conducted exhaustive research to craft questions that had not been asked before. "We knew what questions had not been answered in the public domain. We also asked them, 'What have you never shared?'" Kaveri recalls. Narayana Murthy, for instance, shared his 12-point plan for Bengaluru, a blueprint for the city's future that had never been published before, with one condition: "I will only allow you to publish me if you publish my plan," he insisted.

The book does not just profile tech titans; it also celebrates the stories of everyday Bangaloreans. From the potter in Potter's Town to urbanist Naresh Narasimhan, the BANGALOREAN team carefully chose each profile to represent the city's spirit.

Tania reflects on the emotional depth uncovered during the interviews. "Kiran is a friend, but some of the things in the book, like her talking about her father's role in making her believe she could do anything, were new to me."

The honesty of the subjects was striking. For instance, Nikhil Kamath, co-founder of Zerodha, laid bare his vulnerabilities.

"I'm no saint. Don't make me out to be a saint. I'm as insecure, jealous, and ambitious as anyone else," he confessed. "The way the interviews were conducted and the premise of the book allowed the walls to come down a bit with the people interviewed," adds Tania.

Evolving yet rooted
The journey of creating *BANGALOREAN* was filled with heartwarming moments. Kaveri recalls the emotional reactions of the book's subjects when they saw their stories in print for the first time. "Their reactions, and tears, moved us."

According to Kaveri and Tania, *BANGALOREAN* is more than a book. It is a project that invites people to reflect on what it means to be part of a constantly evolving city and yet be deeply rooted in its identity. "If you look at Bengaluru's history, it was sponsored by kings to become a hub for education in all fields, including science, engineering, and medicine," Kaveri explains.

This foundation laid the groundwork for the city's rise as the Silicon Valley of the East. However, she notes that Bengaluru has not lost its essence. "Just yesterday, I heard someone talking about retiring and choosing Bengaluru because of the weather. Though it has become a hub for employment, it remains a pensioners' paradise."

For details and to order the book, visit bookbangalorean.com

One role at a time

Shilpa Anandraj

Kaajal Kunder is a Mangalurean, born and brought up in Navi Mumbai. She moved to Bengaluru six months ago to further her career in Kannada films. The actor is awaiting the release of the film, *Bili Chukki Halli Hakki*, where she plays a character named Kavita.

Written and directed by Mahesh Gowda, the film, says Kaajal, speaks of vitiligo, without being preachy. "The film does not aim at creating awareness about the skin condition. Instead, it deals with the emotional state and challenges a person with vitiligo goes through and how it affects the people connected to them. The film's director, Mahesh, who plays the lead, has this skin condition."

Kaajal started her career with small roles on television, including *Har Har Mahadev*. She found her footing in Kannada cinema with *Maya Kannadi, KTM* with Deekshith Shetty and *Pepe* with Vinay Rajkumar.

In *Bili Chukki Halli Hakki,* Kaajal says, she plays a simple, yet mature character. "Kavita is an introvert, she is neither vocal or expressive. I was drawn to this character and also believe the concept of the film is unique."

Kaajal is a trained Bharatanatyam dancer. "I enjoy all forms of dance – from Bollywood to folk and everything in between. I nurtured a dream of acting since childhood and started giving auditions as soon as I started college. That is how my acting journey began, with one small role at a time."

Having lived in Mumbai all her life, Kaajal's first challenge as an actor in Kannada cinema was to master Kannada. "I was new to Bengaluru and navigating it was overwhelming. The journey is never easy, specifically for women. In retrospect, I feel that the struggle was necessary for my personal growth. These are the experiences I lean on to build my on-screen characters."

As an artiste, Kaajal believes, the way to prove her mettle is by giving her best shot to every role. "I have been lucky that all the characters I play have been strong women. The credit for this goes to the writers and directors."

Her work in theatre in Mumbai was also a help, Kaajal says. "During my school and college days, my stage performances boosted my confidence and nudged me towards taking acting seriously."

Cinema for Kaajal is a medium to portray powerful characters. "I wish to explore every kind of role that will in themselves tell a story. There is an audience for every kind of film."

Describing her role in *Pepe* as challenging, Kaajal says, "I am just the opposite of my loud, onscreen character, in real life. My role in *Bili chukki...*, playing a character who bottles up all her feelings, was a challenge."

In most of her films Kaajal has donned a natural look. "My only concern is to look like the character I portray. In *Bili chukki...* I play a rural girl. If I unnecessarily deck up my face, I will not be doing justice to the role or the story. I go with what the story demands."

Most of her roles, Kaajal says have been de-glamorised. "I am okay with that. A film has to connect with the audience and be rooted in the culture while finding new ways to interpret or present a story."

Somewhere along the way, Kaajal says, we are forgetting our roots and trying to create larger-than-life characters. "Technology and a big canvas works for films such as *Brahmāstra: Part One - Shiva*. If the same is force fitted to another story, it kills the cinematic experience."

Role play Kaajal Kunder. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

FILM REVIEW

True to life The poster for *Nimma Vasthugalige Neeve Javabdaararu*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Finders, keepers and losers

Vivek MV

The public safety reminder of "please take care of your belongings" is often considered redundant until we lose something valuable owing to our negligence. Even if we do end up being a victim of a clever robbery, all we do is curse the crook and move on. Keshav Moorthy's *Nimma Vasthugalige Neeve Javaabdaararu* (meaning: You are responsible for your belongings) delves into the psyche of those who steal.

The three-film anthology begins with the story of Inaayat (Prasanna V Shetty), who stutters to sell his company's product but never misses a chance to flip a shoe or a slipper lying upside down, thanks to his obsessive-compulsive disorder.

His psychological condition is an underlying factor that forces Inaayat to stick to certain aspects of his life, even if it involves huge risks. The film then shifts to the story of Rohith (Madhusudhan Govind), a kleptomaniac. We see a drastic change in the backdrop in the two stories. From the middle-class life of Inayaat, who works hard, we witness the world of Rohith, who steals for fun.

Inayaat's tale reflects every middle-class man's struggles with financial burdens in a big city. *Nimma Vasthugalige Neeve Javaabdaararu*, shot mostly in real locations, is a reflection of ever-evolving Bengaluru.

After taking us through the city's bylanes, cinematographer Harsha Kumar Gowda shows us the vibrant side of Bengaluru in the second story as Rohith and Rathna bond over 'similar interests'. Essaying the young couple in the relationship drama, Apoorva Bharadwaj and Madhusudhan Govind surrender to the crazy moments of the story to strike up terrific chemistry. The light-hearted tone of the movie is akin to a joyous holiday.

In a way, *Nimma Vasthugalige Neeve Javaabdaararu* is fine proof of director Keshav Moorthy's ability to dabble with different genres. The changing moods of the anthology are complimented by Prathik Sathik's refreshing score, transforming the serious themes into fun and intriguing.

The third movie is blessed with intense drama, amplified further by the brooding presence of Dileep Raj and Shilpa Manjunath. The film keeps you guessing about its next move. Though a tad long, the director gradually draws you into the story. The short gives a delicious spin to its core theme of stealing and losing things. How do you deal with lost trust? Are all of us bad in someone's story?

It was refreshing to see the director's non-judgemental treatment of his flawed characters. We have been conditioned in Kannada cinema to see films passing a moral judgment. *Nimma Vasthugalige Neeve Javaabdaararu* is a much-needed change in that aspect.

Nimma Vasthugalige Neeve Javaabdaararu *is currently running in theatres.*

Nimma Vasthugalige Neeve Javaabdaararu (Kannada)
Director: Keshav Moorthy
Cast: Dileep Raj, Shilpa Manjunath, Apoorva Bharadwaj, Madhusudhan Govind, Prasanna V Shetty, Hari Samashti
Runtime: 132 minutes
Storyline: The three-film anthology reveals the complex interplay between people and their possessions

INBRIEF

Leopard sighted in Tirupati; man falls off bike in panic

Yet another leopard sighting near Alipiri, at the Tirumala foothills, has sent a fresh wave of panic among residents of Tirupati. D. Muni Kumar, working as a contract employee at Aswini Hospital at Tirumala hills, saw a leopard jumping off the road median to reach the forest nearby on Saturday. As he panicked and tried to swerve away from the divider, his motorbike skidded and collapsed on the road. He sustained serious injuries on the head and shoulder.

Burglars decamp with jewellery in Vellore, Ambur

Burglars decamped with 15 sovereigns of gold jewellery, silver objects and ₹40,000 cash from the house of a nurse at Viruthampattu village near Katpadi here on Sunday. The police said that H. Vijayasri, 46, had left for her native village for a medical emergency. When she returned home on Sunday morning, she found the front door broken open. In Ambur, 25 gold sovereigns and ₹30,000 cash were found missing from the house of Rakib Rahman, 28, when he returned home after visiting his in-laws in Bengaluru.

Man held for trying to steal gold biscuit from Tirumala

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam vigilance officials on Saturday caught an outsourced employee, identified as Penchalayya, while trying to smuggle out a 100-gram gold biscuit from the Parakamani hall (where the process of counting the Hundi offerings is done), according to TTD Additional Executive Officer Ch. Venkaiah Chowdary. The Tirumala police registered a case and are investigating to determine if the accused acted alone or was part of a larger network.

Conduct land survey in Munambam, Waqf Board tells committee

It also asks the judicial panel to take steps to 'protect the interests of the persons occupying the Waqf property' without causing loss to the board

K.S. Sudhi
KOCHI

The Kerala Waqf Board has urged the C.N. Ramachandran Nair Judicial Commission on the Munambam land dispute to recommend to the government steps to "protect the interests of the persons occupying the Waqf property without causing loss to the Waqf".

The Board, asserting that the holding was a Waqf, suggested that the commission issue directions to survey the holding covered by the Waqf deed and identify the extent of properties in the possession of third persons and Farook College, and that was lost to sea. The managing committee of the Kozhikode college is the *Mutawalli* (manager) of the property.

A mere reading of the deed by which the property reached the college would reveal that it was a Waqf property and much of it was alienated, according to the statement filed by the Chief Executive Officer of the Board before the commission last week.

Strong opposition: A march to the Waqf Board office taken out by the BJP Minority morcha at Munambam. H. VIBHU

Church forums' support

Incidentally, the commission is in the process of hearing various stakeholders in the contentious issue. The protest of the Munambam residents, spearheaded by the Church, entered its 92nd day on Sunday, with various Church-affiliated organisations pledging their support for the residents' campaign to restore the revenue rights of their property.

The Kerala Waqf Samrakshana Vedi urged the State government to withdraw the order appointing the commission as the judge reportedly made a public statement that the holding was not a Waqf, which according to the organisation was arbitrary, unfair, wrong and amounted to contempt of court and beyond the Terms of Reference of the commission.

The Board informed the commission that the claim of the college that the property was not Waqf, but a gift deed, was not maintainable before the commission as the question regarding the nature of the holding was not to be decided by the commission on its Terms of Reference.

The Board has also taken the stand that persons allegedly claiming possession and title over the Waqf property cannot be treated as bona fide purchasers. Some persons have unlawfully and without permission of the Board made tie-ups to grab the Waqf properties and claimed to be bona fide purchasers. Several hotels and heritage resorts have come up on the property. Some others put up houses there were also operating home-stays, the board pointed out.

Revanth govt. not curbing attacks on minorities: Kavitha

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MLC K. Kavitha has observed that Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has his political roots in the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological base of BJP, and that is the reason why he is discriminating against minorities.

Speaking to media in Nizamabad on Sunday, she said violence against the minorities had increased in Telangana since the Chief Minister, who also holds the portfolio of Home, was "acting as a mute spectator". Mr.Reddy had even forgotten the promises made by the Congress and Gandhi family to the minorities before the elections as he was "neglecting them completely".

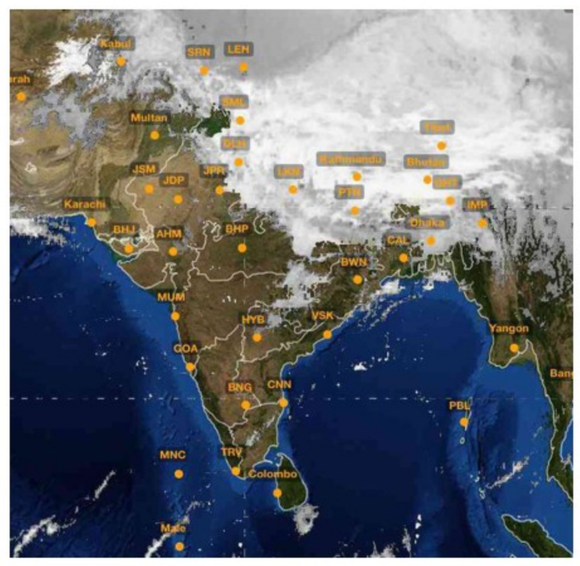
Pre-poll promises

Demanding immediate implementation of the minorities declaration made by the Congress party before the elections, the former MP said Rahul Gandhi had spoken extensively about democracy but activists of his party were wreaking havoc in the party offices of BRS in Telangana.

By resorting to an attack on the BRS office at Bhuvanagiri, the Congress had exposed its hypocrisy as Mr. Gandhi was preaching about the Constitution on one hand and his party ranks were practising vandalism on the other.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 17.00 HRS)

Forecast for Monday: Dense to very dense fog conditions very likely in isolated pockets of Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Sikkim, Bihar, Odisha, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura during night/morning hours.

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	30.5	12.8	Kozhikode	—	34.6	25.4
Ahmedabad	—	27.2	13.9	Kurnool	—	32.6	19.1
Aizawl	—	27.9	11.4	Lucknow	0.6	21.3	11.7
Allahabad	—	19.7	11.7	Madurai	—	30.5	22.5
Bengaluru	—	29.8	17.0	Mangaluru	—	33.2	23.1
Bhopal	—	21.8	14.4	Mumbai	—	27.9	20.0
Bhubaneswar	—	27.8	—	Mysuru	—	—	16.6
Chandigarh	18.4	18.4	11.0	New Delhi	2.5	16.1	7.9
Chennai	—	27.5	22.4	Patna	—	24.6	13.2
Coimbatore	—	32.1	20.2	Port Blair	—	29.5	26.2
Dehradun	2.8	12.8	10.2	Puducherry	—	28.3	22.6
Gangtok	—	14.4	8.0	Pune	—	30.7	18.5
Goa	—	—	—	Raipur	—	29.0	15.5
Guwahati	—	24.2	11.2	Ranchi	—	26.0	9.6
Hubballi	—	30.0	19.0	Shillong	—	17.9	6.6
Hyderabad	—	27.2	18.1	Shimla	—	7.5	2.2
Imphal	—	23.1	12.1	Srinagar	—	10.0	-3.0
Jaipur	4.7	15.2	10.0	Thiruvananthapuram	39.2	33.7	23.6
Kochi	—	31.0	25.0	Tiruchi	—	28.7	22.4
Kohima	—	15.0	9.0	Vijayawada	—	29.0	19.4
Kolkata	—	27.7	12.8	Visakhapatnam	—	28.8	21.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.16	336	31	120	118	
Bengaluru	.14	5	18	79	101	
Chennai	.10	11	—	79	92	
Delhi	9	69	83	371	215	
Hyderabad	5	122	11	136	139	
Kolkata	8	100	58	286	—	
Lucknow	8	66	52	339	295	
Mumbai	9	—	2	163	123	
Pune	—	48	47	239	150	
Visakhapatnam	8	63	30	197	133	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m.,Byrnihat, Meghalaya recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 402 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast,Aizwal, Mizoram recorded a healthy AQI score of 26.

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

Case against actors Rana, Venkatesh

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

A case was booked against actor Venkatesh Daggubati, his nephew and actor Rana Daggubati, and their family members, including producer D. Suresh, over demolition of a hotel run by a businessman on the land taken on lease from the Daggubati family, the police said on Sunday.

Interim injunction

The complainant alleged that in November 2022, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) attempted to demolish parts of the restaurant despite an existing interim injunction granted by the Additional Chief Judge, City Civil Court, Hyderabad.

T.N. to train diaspora in Tamil, folk arts

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government has come up with a training programme to take the Tamil language, and the State's rich folk arts and music to the younger generations of the diaspora. It would train 100 teachers and Tamil artistes, who in turn would be sent to countries with the diaspora, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said on Sunday.

Speaking at the celebrations of the World Tamil Diaspora Day 2025 here, Mr. Stalin said that the training would be offered in coordination with Tamil associations abroad for two years. The government would allocate ₹10 crore for the purpose, he said, and called upon the diaspora visiting Chennai for the 'Ethisaiyum Thamizhanange' event not to forget their identity.

Honouring efforts: CM M.K. Stalin presenting an award at the World Tamil Diaspora Day 2025 celebrations in Chennai. R. RAGU

The training would be offered in coordination with Tamil associations abroad for two years

He handed over 'Tamil Mamani' award to Dr. Vijay Janakiraman, who was instrumental in setting up the Tamil Chair in Harvard University. He also handed over the Best Cultural Ambassador Award to Krishnakanthan Sandeep from Sri Lanka. He handed over 'Kaniyan Poongundran' awards to six individuals. National University of Singapore (NUS) Registrar Rajaram Ramasubban received the award under the education category and S. Kamalakannan, who published the history of late social reformer 'Periyar' E.V. Ramasamy in Japanese, got the award under the social development category. Pudhumai Thamizhachi Trust's Sridevi Sivanandam (women's category) and Tecton Engineering and Construction L.L.C's Lakshmanan Somasundaram (business category) received the awards.

Associate Professor S. Arokyaraj, Sejong University, Korea received it under the S&T category and ophthalmologist Gangadhara Sundar in NUS, under the medicine category.

Sri Lankan Minister Ramalingam Chandrasekar; Governor of Papua and New Guinea's West New Britain Province Sasindran Muthuvel; Malaysian MP Datuk Seri M. Saravanan; Reunion Islands Mayor Joe; and former South African Minister Ravi Pillay, among others, were present.

Sabarimala: procession of Thiruvabharanam sets off from Pandalam on Sunday

The Hindu Bureau
PATHANAMTHITTA

The customary procession carrying the Thiruvabharanam (sacred jewellery of the presiding deity at Sabarimala) set off to the Sannidhanam from Pandalam on Sunday afternoon.

The boxes containing the Thiruvabharanam are being carried by a 26-member team. A team of Travancore Devaswom Board officials and the police are accompanying the procession.

The proceedings began with the authorities shifting the sacred jewellery from the Srambickal Palace to the adjoining Valiyakoickal Sastha temple by 4 a.m. It was later taken out by 1 p.m. following a felicitation of the group members. A huge number of devotees thronged the palace and the temple to witness the occasion.

Holy parade: The Thiruvabharanam being carried by a 26-member team headed by Kulathinal Gangadharan Pillai. LEJU KAMAL

The procession, which began in the afternoon, is slated to reach Laha on Monday after halting at the Puthiyakavu Devi temple at Ayroor on Sunday night. After an overnight stay at Laha, it will reach the Sannidhanam via Valiyanavattom and Saramkuthi on Tuesday evening.

Archbishop takes over as the vicar of archdiocese

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

Archbishop Joseph Pamplany assumed office as the Vicar of the Major Archbishop of the Ernakulam-Angamaly archdiocese of the Syro-Malabar Church on Sunday.

Archbishop Pamplany assumed office amid a protest by rebel priests inside the premises of the Archbishop's house in the city against the police forcefully removing them.

Meanwhile, the rebels welcomed the appointment of the new vicar, calling his arrival a path to reconciliation.

MGNREGS participation among A.P.'s Chenchu tribe remains 'dismally low', shows study by NGO

The Hindu Bureau
VISAKHAPATNAM

There is severe underutilisation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in areas with Chenchu populations, exacerbating the socio-economic vulnerabilities of this particularly vulnerable tribal group, according to a study by LibTech India, an NGO.

The study focused on the mandals of Dornala and Yerragondapalem in Prakasam district and Atmakur in Nandyal district, where around 50% of the Chenchus reside.

The Chenchu Special Project under the MGNREGS provided 180 days of work per individual per year instead of the standard 100 days per household. The initiative, implemented through the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), ensured timely payments, culturally sensitive work environments and greater community participation.

Srcapping of the Chenchu Special Project under the MGNREGS led to many challenges for the tribal people. KOMMURI SRINIVAS

However, the project was scrapped in 2021 when the management of the MGNREGS shifted to a centralised system. This transition marked the beginning of numerous challenges for Chenchu households.

Analysis of data from April to September 2024 showed that MGNREGS participation among Chenchu households remains dismally low.

Incomes have plummeted, with many households earning an average of just ₹12,000 annually through MGNREGA, compared with the potential ₹48,000 that could have been earned had the scheme been fully utilised.

Many Chenchu households did not possess a physical copy of their job cards, which made accessing the MGNREGA benefits nearly impossible. Many were unaware of their job card status or had been unable to retrieve them owing to bureaucratic hurdles.

The loss of income from the MGNREGS has forced many to abandon agriculture owing to high cost, increasing reliance on the inadequate Public Distribution System. This disrupted education, weakened family cohesion and contributed to a decline in Self-Help Groups (SHGs), which were once crucial for financial stability and women empowerment.

17.9 kg smuggled gold worth ₹14 crore seized

The Hindu Bureau
VIJAYAWADA

Officers of the Customs Preventive Commissionerate in Vijayawada seized foreign-origin smuggled gold weighing 17.90 kg and valued at ₹14.37 crore from 16 persons at different locations in the last three days.

CPC Commissioner S. Narasimha Reddy said in a release that the seizures were made at the Tadipatri and Nellore railway stations, and Bollapalli toll plaza. Acting on specific Intelligence, officers from the CPC and Central GST Department from Tirupati and Guntur busted the racket in a coordinated operation.

The smugglers were carrying the smuggled gold from Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and it was found that the foreign markings were erased to conceal the nature of the gold.

The accused, who included a woman carrier, were arrested under the provisions of the Customs Act, 1962. They were remanded in 14 days judicial custody by the Court of Special Judge for Economic offences, Visakhapatnam.

The release said the Customs Department remained vigilant and committed to tackling smuggling and safeguarding the country's economic and national interests, and that citizens were free to report any suspicious activity related to smuggling, or evasion of customs duty.

Centralising control

The Centre must not attempt to run universities by proxy appointments

In a federal setup, attempts at undermining any stakeholder in the subject matter of education, which is in the Concurrent List, will prove disruptive. The Draft UGC (Minimum Qualifications for Appointment and Promotion of Teachers and Academic Staff in Universities and Colleges and Measures for the Maintenance of Standards in Higher Education) Regulations, 2025, seeks to do precisely this. Demonstrating the Centre's penchant for facilitating control over institutions through gubernatorial proxies, it proposes to divest State governments of their role in the selection process for Vice Chancellor (VC) of universities. All powers are sought to be vested in the Chancellor – i.e., the Governor in most State universities – by taking away the function of constituting the search-cum-selection committee from the higher education departments. Such a committee would comprise a nominee each of the Chancellor; UGC Chairman; and of the respective university syndicate/senate. The Chancellor would appoint the VC out of three to five names recommended by the committee. Any violations, the draft warns, could attract debarment from participating in UGC schemes and denial of funding under the UGC Act. This comes against the backdrop of conflicts between State governments and Raj Bhavans on appointing VCs, which have deprived several universities, particularly in Tamil Nadu, of leadership. Naturally, opposition has come from several States, including Tamil Nadu, which passed a House resolution urging the Centre to immediately withdraw the draft. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has argued that the draft is not only against the basic federal principles enshrined in the Constitution but also poses a threat to the higher education system. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, the AIADMK and the CPI-M have endorsed this stance.

A proposal to make non-academics eligible for the VC's job has also drawn criticism. The draft says such non-academics must have served for at least 10 years at a senior level in industry, public administration, public policy and/or public sector undertakings, with a proven track record of significant academic or scholarly contributions. Mr. Vijayan fears this could be used to appoint Sangh Parivar loyalists. However, universities have benefited from the scholarship of non-academics such as former President K.R. Narayanan and scientist Y. Nayudamma; appointing academics does not guarantee visionary leadership. The proposal to extend the VC's tenure from the typical three to five years is welcome. The UGC would do well to remove anti-federal clauses from the draft regulations and allay apprehensions on other provisions. In the long run, it should aim for reforms to obliterate any governmental role in university administration, except maybe, for funding, and elevate them into truly autonomous institutions that nurture excellence.

Law by reflex

Good implementation, not stringency of law, will deter sexual crimes

The tendency to make existing laws more stringent is an administrative reflex action often occasioned by political problems set off by particular crimes. The amendments enacted by the Tamil Nadu Assembly to criminal laws on sexual crimes against women fall under this category. In response to the Opposition moves to corner the DMK regime after a rape within the premises of Anna University in Chennai, the government has moved to enhance punishments under the penal and procedural laws. That the perpetrator is a DMK sympathiser and that some details of the student survivor were leaked added political sharpness to the general criticism over such an offence happening inside the campus. At pains to deny any leniency and overcome the setback to its image after the Madras High Court formed a special investigation team, the DMK government has chosen to amend the law based on the theory that more stringent laws deter sexual assault and harassment. This belief is not founded on any statistical or empirical evidence, but is often invoked by those in government. This invariably means the use of legislative power to send out a political message that the administration is committed to women's safety. After all, necessary amendments need not have to wait for a brazen crime or a public outcry.

This is not to say the amendments are unreasonable: they enhance punishments for a range of sexual offences and extend bail-denying features to such offences as well as those under the POCSO Act. Also welcome is the new provision for passing binding protection orders that will ensure perpetrators do not contact survivors by any means. The death penalty has been introduced for acid attack that results in the victim being reduced to a vegetative state. On the other hand, the newly introduced definition of harassment of women to cover the use of digital and electronic means and even non-verbal means may be too broadly worded and prone to misuse. Few would disagree with the enhancement of jail terms for rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking and voyeurism, but a question does arise whether the mere increase in the quantum of punishment increases the possibility of conviction or reduces the incidence of these crimes. The onus of arresting offenders, gathering credible evidence and proving it in court remains the same. Impartial investigation and resisting pressure for a cover-up while effectively implementing existing laws are more crucial for demonstrating commitment to women's safety. Making workplaces, public space and homes safer for women will work better than merely adding to the severity of laws.

India's data protection rules need some fine-tuning

Vivan Sharan

a technology policy expert at Koan Advisory Group

Srishti Joshi

a technology policy expert at Koan Advisory Group

On January 3, 2025, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) released the much-anticipated Draft Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules – a key moment in India's journey to regulate digital personal data. This step follows the passage of the DPDP Act, 2023, bringing India closer to operationalising its framework for safeguarding personal data.

The draft rules represent a departure from the earlier and controversial Personal Data Protection Bill, which many deemed was overly restrictive and even hostile to industry interests. The Bill underwent extensive framing, reframing and consultations over nearly a decade, only to be rescinded when committees and government stakeholders wisely decided it was untenable.

In contrast, the positive response to the DPDP Act and its accompanying rules, reflected in conversations with businesses and in media coverage, stems from the less prescriptive, principles-based approach of the draft rules.

Unlike the earlier rush to regulate under the so-called "Brussels Effect", where global digital rulemaking mirrored the European Union (EU)'s interventionist regulatory ethos, India has taken a more pragmatic stance. The EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), once hailed as a gold standard by privacy experts, now faces criticism for unintended consequences – favouring well-resourced corporations, stifling smaller enterprises, and failing to significantly enhance public trust in the Internet. India's measured approach thus far offers a refreshing alternative to Europe's interventionist policies.

The hits as pragmatism and flexibility

One of the draft rules' standout features is their principles-based framework for notice and consent. While the GDPR has cumbersome requirements, such as notifying users of indirect data acquisition, cross-border data transfers, and automated decision-making processes, India's rules emphasise simplicity and clarity. This helps reduce "consent fatigue", a significant issue in Europe, where users are inundated with unnecessary details, such as the location of data processing – information of little practical use.

In 2023, the European Commission introduced the Cookie Pledge Initiative to address growing frustration over incessant consent pop-ups. However, such course correction would have been unnecessary had the EU taken a less invasive approach to regulating user interfaces and consent mechanisms. The very existence of this pledge highlights the burdens created by prescriptive regulation.

India's DPDP Rules sidestep these pitfalls by focusing on outcomes rather than processes, empowering users without drowning businesses and consumers in unnecessary complexities. The rules avoid dictating how entities should enable users to exercise their rights to correction, erasure, nomination, withdrawal of consent and to seek information from entities. They require only the publication of relevant information on apps and websites. In contrast, the GDPR is prescriptive about how similar information should be presented, including instances where entities may need to provide this information orally to users. Why should the state dictate every aspect of an app or website's design or user interface? India's approach, thankfully, respects business autonomy and innovation.

The largely positive response to the Draft Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules flows from its less prescriptive, principles-based approach

The processing of children's personal data requires stricter protection compared to other types of data processing – which the rules provide for. However, as more children engage with digital technologies online, they increasingly benefit from certain activities, such as monitoring and tracking, which are of value in specific contexts. Take the case of educational institutions, including supplementary education and vocational training services. They rely on activities such as behavioural monitoring and tracking to deliver targeted interventions tailored to students' academic performance. These practices leverage the benefits of learning management systems, which personalise instruction and improve educational outcomes. Recognising this, the rules thoughtfully allow exemptions for specific industries. Educational institutions, clinical and mental health establishments, allied health-care providers, and child-care centres are not required to verify parental consent for tracking and behavioural monitoring, as long as they adhere to guardrails. The exemption for such industries demonstrates a nuanced understanding of industry-specific needs, reflecting the principles of thoughtful policymaking.

The misses as data localisation, overreach

However, the draft rules are not without flaws. Their provisions for restricting cross-border data flows introduce unnecessary complexity and ambiguity. Significant Data Fiduciaries (SDFs) – large enterprises handling substantial data volumes – face potential localisation mandates that extend beyond the legislation's original scope. While the DPDP Act allows the government to restrict personal data transfers, it limits such action to specific notified countries. Differentiating between SDFs and smaller entities, where the second enjoy relaxed transfer rules for the same data, creates the risk of regulatory arbitrage. Smaller entities could exploit the lighter regime to gain an unfair advantage. These inconsistencies may deter investment and drive businesses out of India. The localisation provision likely stems from the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in accessing cross-border data for investigations. While these agencies undeniably need access to such data, a narrower sectoral approach to localisation could prove more effective than a centralised one. The Reserve Bank of India's 2018 mandate for localising payment data is a prime example of proportionate regulation. Tailored specifically to the financial sector, it effectively addressed legitimate industry concerns without causing too many business disruptions. Applying this approach to personal data could balance security and compliance with economic competitiveness.

Some areas still require greater clarity. Businesses need safeguards to verify whether users requesting information about data processing are legitimate. This necessity is acknowledged even in the GDPR. However, India's draft rules do not address scenarios where businesses face incessant information requests or provide scope for businesses to charge a reasonable fee for requests which are excessive or even unfounded. A related ambiguity is whether the government can demand access to sensitive business data. If so, how will it ensure the protection of such information from falling into the hands of competitors? What if this information is a trade secret? These gaps highlight the need for thinking about procedural integrity.

What lies ahead

According to IBM, data breaches cost Indian businesses an average of ₹19.5 crore ($2.35 million) in 2024. Compliance with data protection laws should not be seen as a regulatory obligation, but as critical to protecting business reputation and ensuring continuity.

India must also move beyond reliance on notice-and-consent mechanisms to safeguard citizens' privacy in future laws. Notice and consent originate from the medical profession, where they can still be deemed to work effectively in controlled settings. However, in environments such as malls, airports, or even beaches, individuals have little opportunity to provide consent. With the convergence of the Internet of Things, 5G, and artificial intelligence enabling unprecedented data collection, India must envision privacy frameworks that do not exclusively rely on the fallible principle of consent. As public consultations refine the draft rules, prioritising preservation of the framework's flexibility and industry-specific accommodations is key. This approach will help maintain a balance between innovation, economic growth, and individual rights – something not many jurisdictions have managed to get right.

The views expressed are personal

Draft digital data protection rules and authoritarianism

Apar Gupta

an advocate and the founder-director of the Internet Freedom Foundation

In August 2024, as India marked six years since the K.S. Puttaswamy judgment reaffirmed privacy as a fundamental right, the Internet Freedom Foundation hosted its annual "Privacy Supreme" event – not as a celebration, but as a sombre reflection on its unfulfilled promise. Social activist Nikhil Dey shared chilling accounts, from Ajmer in Rajasthan, on how Aadhaar, heralded for efficiency, has excluded vulnerable residents from pensions and rations. This grim reality must be central to tech policy discussions, including the Draft Digital Data Protection Rules, 2025.

Executive overreach, scant transparency

Rulemaking typically fleshes out legislation, ensuring laws passed by Parliament are enforceable while maintaining administrative flexibility. Yet, the draft Data Protection Rules provoke concern on questions of executive overreach and vague governance. Some earlier analysis here bears repetition for these rules are a conscientious pupil in obedience of its master. Here, its parent is the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, that was rammed through Parliament as "a product of the subversion of the democratic process". There is more than a mere lack of trust in how the law was created, for its substantive provisions advance a broader policy of "total state control – a digital leash to yank us and make us stand in line than to serve the preambular objectives of the Constitution of India". Its provisions are deliberately vague, granting broad discretion under the nebulous phrase "as may be prescribed".

Despite the Act's swift passage on August 9, 2023, its implementation remains in limbo. Sixteen months later, the draft Rules have been unveiled for consultation. But are they truly "public"? Published as a 51-page pdf (in Hindi/English as a gazette notification), with a three-page explanatory note that reads as AI glop, a simplistic and vague summary offers little insight into the policy choices during drafting. Comments can only be submitted through the MyGov platform that might encourage expert input but restricts broader participation.

There is a common thread with the parent Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, with its digital leash

Transparency is undermined by the government's decision to treat submissions as fiduciary, precluding public disclosure and counter-comments. This controlled feedback process resembles a "corporate consultation" rather than a public one.

Substantively, the Data Protection Rules build on a framework of intentional vagueness and executive dominance. Many compliance obligations are either self-determined by companies handling personal data or left to government discretion. Consider Rule 3, which governs consent notices. It mandates "clear and plain language" but fails to define these terms, leaving interpretation subject to India's vast linguistic and comprehension diversity. Without specific standards, notices risk being overly generic or oversimplified, omitting critical details. Similarly, while the Rules require an "itemized description" of data, they do not clarify whether the disclosure is for categories such as financial or health data; or to specific data points such as account numbers, or even metadata and inferred data. Nor do they define timelines for data breach notifications to users, raising risks for individuals in urgent situations. Such ambiguities, if purely administrative, should have been resolved by the standard setting powers of an independent regulatory authority that does not exist.

No independence for Data Protection Board

The vagueness reflects deeper structural flaws. The Act eschews the creation of an independent regulatory body, instead, consolidating power within the Union Government. Through informal interactions and gazette notifications, the government wields unchecked authority over citizens and the digital marketplace. Even the Data Protection Board (DPB), which has a limited ambit of jurisdiction to adjudicate on breaches, lacks independence. The Board's chairperson is selected based on recommendations of a search and selection committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, raising critical concerns. How will the committee address the critiques of political control that plague similar appointment processes? What value does the search committee offer when it has advance knowledge that its recommendations are not binding on the Union Government?

Even after its formation, the DPB is hamstrung. Its authority is largely limited to determining data breaches, and its independence is compromised by service conditions of its members to central government employees. This contravenes long-standing recommendations, such as the 2006 Planning Commission consultation paper on regulation, which emphasised that "the selection, appointment, and removal of chairpersons and members should be insulated against any perceived interference or manipulation that may influence the outcome". How will a subservient DPB apply data protection effectively? Rule 5 exempts data processing for subsidies from consent requirements. In such cases, can there be any meaningful accountability? It is not unreasonable to foresee scenarios where the DPB may fail to act promptly or effectively, particularly when complaints involve powerful government entities such as the UIDAI that handles Aadhaar. It raises fundamental doubts about what it means for community organisations that may approach it for redress on user rights for things as simple as getting a data record corrected to receive rations.

Finally, regarding Rule 22, which contains the power of the government to requisition information, there is an absence of limitations and safeguards. As many may read this column, they may still wonder why the data protection rules are too late, too little, too vague? The answer may be provided by Mr. Dey who framed his characterisation of the digital policies of the Indian state with a reference to Through the Looking-Glass. When Alice probes Humpty Dumpty on how the same word can have different meanings, his reply captures the core of India's data protection regime: "The question is... which is to be master – that's all."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rat-hole mining

The tragic loss of lives in Assam's Dima Hasao mine disaster highlights the need for strict safety regulations. The continued reliance on dangerous rat-hole mining practices is unacceptable (Page 1, January 12). The government must prioritise the safety of miners by investing in safer extraction methods, improving the welfare of miners, and holding mine owners accountable.

Raksha Hosur Pradeep,
Bengaluru

P. Jayachandran

The passing of playback singer P. Jayachandran has left a void in the world of south Indian light music. His dulcet voice was very comforting; he could scale the middle octaves with ease. One of his best songs is a duet with S. Janaki in the film, *Kadal Meengal*. The Ilaiyaraaja composition, "Thaalattudhe Vaanam", is outstanding, harmonious and touching. The interludes were in perfect synchrony. The unassuming singer will remain a role model for many an aspiring singer.

A.V. Narayanan,
Chennai

Malayalam film songs have been transformed to another level these days, but the songs sung by Jayachandran will always find a place in the heart across generations. His voice has the power to evoke nostalgia. His songs are the perfect example of "old is gold".

Chithra Joseph,
Hyderabad

The reforms needed in the MEA

India is on the rise, thanks to its consistent economic growth, political stability, and a bold, autonomous foreign policy. Whether it is the success of its G20 presidency, its strategic autonomy during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, its leadership in vaccine diplomacy during COVID-19, or its initiative in voicing the concerns of the Global South, India has established itself as a major player in global affairs.

However, with this increased global stature comes the need for an organisational framework that supports and sustains such ambitions. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) needs to keep pace with the demands of this new era and evolve to meet them. A critical examination of its staffing, structure, and operational approach reveals significant gaps that must be addressed urgently.

Col Rajeev Agarwal (retired)

Former Director at Ministry of External affairs, New Delhi

Areas of improvement

The MEA is staffed with about 850 Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officers tasked with formulating and executing foreign policy across 193 embassies and consulates worldwide. While the annual intake of IFS officers has increased from 12-14 to 32-35 in recent years, it remains grossly inadequate. Comparatively, the U.S. has around 14,500 foreign service officers; the U.K., 4,600; and Russia around 4,500 officers.

Given the current intake rate, India would require decades to reach an optimal workforce of 1,500 officers. To address this challenge, the Ministry should consider lateral hiring and absorbing officers from other government services, including defence personnel with experience as defence attachés and academics specialising in international relations. Such recruitment should be subject to stringent selection criteria and probation periods to ensure quality. Additionally, consultants could be engaged for specialised roles. The current perception is that they are stop-gap appointees.

The MEA's internal structure requires reorganisation to reduce fragmentation and improve coordination. It has many small divisions, especially territorial ones, which often result in inefficiencies. For instance, India's immediate neighbourhood, a declared priority in its foreign policy, is managed by four separate divisions: the PAI Division (Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran), the BM Division (Bangladesh and Myanmar), the Northern Division (Nepal and Bhutan) and the IOR Division (Sri Lanka, Maldives, and other nations in the Indian Ocean Region). While inputs from these are collated at higher levels, such fragmentation increases the risk of oversight and hinders cohesive regional engagement.

Similarly, the Gulf Division oversees eight Gulf countries, and the WANA Division handles the rest of West Asia and North Africa. Surprisingly, Iran and Türkiye, two pivotal nations in the region, do not fall under either division. Instead, Türkiye is managed by the Central Europe Division, while Iran falls under the PAI Division. Many similar misalignments highlight the need for restructuring and consolidating divisions to create a more efficient and integrated approach.

While officers posted abroad enjoy substantial financial and administrative support, their counterparts in Delhi face significant challenges. Housing facilities have improved, but are still inadequate to accommodate the growing cadre. Furthermore, financial incentives and allowances for officers posted in India are limited, making domestic postings less appealing than foreign assignments. Providing better housing, medical coverage, and educational facilities for their families could work wonders for the morale of these officers. Also, offering financial incentives for Delhi postings could help. After all, this is where critical assessments are made, and key policies are formulated before being executed abroad.

India has established itself as a major player in global affairs. The Ministry of External Affairs needs to keep pace with the demands of this new era

The MEA has long debated the balance between generalist and specialist roles within the IFS. Language skills, a key aspect of diplomatic expertise, often fall victim to the rotational posting system. Officers undergo rigorous training in one foreign language during their initial years and are typically posted in countries where that language is spoken. However, subsequent postings often do not align with their linguistic expertise, reducing the long-term benefits of this training.

To address this, at least one language-trained officer should be posted in each embassy to reduce dependence on interpreters. Often, in tricky negotiations, language skills have proved to be a game changer, and the Ministry could leverage this aspect. Moreover, as officers progress in their careers, they should be encouraged to become specialists or subject matter experts.

As technology increasingly influences foreign policy, the MEA must build capacity in fields such as cybersecurity, space policy, and artificial intelligence. Expecting all IFS officers to master these highly technical areas alongside their core responsibilities is unrealistic. Instead, the Ministry should hire and retain domain specialists who can focus exclusively on these issues throughout their careers.

Steps in the right direction

Despite these challenges, the MEA has made significant efforts to evolve. The establishment of divisions such as Policy, Planning and Research, and the Centre for Contemporary China Studies, reflects its intent to adapt to emerging global trends. The dynamic leadership of Dr. S. Jaishankar has been instrumental in the display of innovation and greater assertiveness in foreign policy and also, as he emphasises, in aligning foreign policy with India's aspirations to become a 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India).

As India moves towards its 100 years of independence in 2047, its foreign policy must evolve in tandem with its global ambitions.

Building the dream capital

Naidu has set the ball rolling, but he has to develop Amaravati in just three years

STATE OF PLAY

V. Raghavendra
raghavendra.v@thehindu.co.in

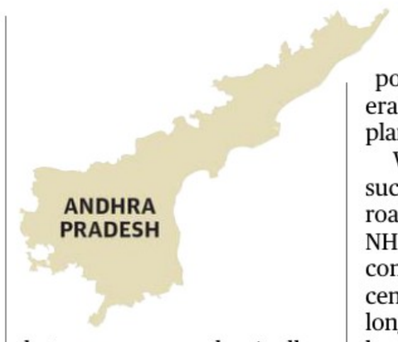
Five years after the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government abandoned the Amaravati project, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has set the ball rolling to construct the "people's capital".

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government has approved capital works to the tune of about ₹50,000 crore. This includes construction of the Legislative Assembly and the High Court buildings. It has also taken steps to invite tenders for works and accorded administrative sanction to 20 engineering works valued at ₹11,468 crore.

In its submission to the Supreme Court, where cases relating to the capital are pending disposal, the government said that it would complete the project in three years instead of six months as ordered by the High Court on March 3, 2022. It pointed out that the timelines set in 2014 when the TDP came to power were "overtaken by past events".

The government is confident of accomplishing the task within the promised time period. However, this is easier said than done because of the sheer size and number of offices and residential spaces that need to be built, as per its target.

In addition, there is the issue of mobilisation of funds. Loan repayment obligations will impose a huge burden on the public exchequer. But this is inevitable since the State desperately needs a capital after Hyderabad ceased to be the common capital of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana



last year, as per the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014.

A silver lining in the cloud is the Central government's promise of providing ₹15,000 crore as aid. It plans to arrange this amount from the World Bank and other multilateral lending institutions. Delegations of the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and so on have conducted a social impact assessment study to lend funds to the Amaravati project. In fact, the World Bank has given in-principle clearance for the loan. The Housing and Urban Development Corporation Limited is also providing a loan of ₹11,000 crore.

The master plan was prepared by the London-based Foster + Partners and no major changes have been made to it by the State government.

The Assembly building, spanning 103 acres, will feature a 250-meter-tall structure, offering a panoramic view of the city. There will be five administrative towers of which three will have at least 39 floors. Besides these, the government is planning to build a host of buildings. The cost of construction of these have gone up by 42% over the last five years, according to the Municipal Administration Minister.

The establishment of offices of various Central government departments, and reputed educational institutions, for which lands were allotted in 2014-19 is an important component in the overall capital development plan.

While infrastructure works, such as connecting the trunk roads in Amaravati to the NH-16, are in various stages of construction, the Centre recently approved a new 57 km-long railway line from Errupalem in Khammam district of Telangana to Nambur in Guntur district via Amaravati. This is bound to give fillip to the development of Amaravati.

For now, the government is busy with the tender floating process. The construction of these buildings is expected to gain momentum this month. Having committed to completing the works in just three years, the government is expected to work ceaselessly. If it does not meet its ambitious deadline, the project will drag on further to the overall detriment of the State. Raising and efficiently using funds for the capital is also a tough task as the government has already been grappling with a shoestring budget. However, Mr. Naidu has an advantage as politically, his government is on sound footing. The TDP-Jana Sena-Bharatiya Janata Party alliance occupies 164 out of 175 seats in the Assembly.

In fact, the YSRCP was also firmly in the saddle with 151 seats. But it jeopardised the capital project by choosing to follow the South African model of three capital cities and failing to implement it. The YSRCP paid the price for its folly by losing the election; and so did the people, who have not seen any development.

Over the last few years, Andhra Pradesh was constantly running into trouble regarding its capital. Finally, it is set to have one.

Is Trump justified in asking EU to buy more oil and gas from the U.S.?

The European Union's oil and gas imports from the U.S. are already increasing at a rapid pace, as the bloc does not want to purchase these products from Russia

DATA POINT

Sambavi Parthasarathy
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump threatened to impose tariffs on many countries if they do not fulfil certain conditions. In November last year, he said he would impose sweeping tariffs on imports from Canada, China, and Mexico if these countries failed to stem illegal border crossings into the U.S. and the trafficking of drugs – in particular Fentanyl, which is a deadly opioid.

He has also threatened the European Union (EU) with tariffs, as the U.S. runs a trade deficit with the bloc. This means that its imports from the EU are higher than its exports. Data show that the U.S. had a trade deficit of more than $208.7 billion with the EU at the end of 2023, second only to China with which it had a trade deficit of $279.4 billion. The third on the list is Mexico (trade deficit of $152.4 billion). With Canada, the U.S. had a trade deficit of $67.9 billion. **Chart 1** shows the U.S.'s trade deficit with select countries at the end of 2023. The other countries which have been threatened with tariffs are also part of the list of countries with which the U.S. runs the highest trade deficits.

It is debatable whether imposition of tariffs is the most efficient way of dealing with this. In 2023, the U.S. imported €40.7 billion worth of motor cars and vehicles from the EU. This was the second biggest commodity in terms of value, from the bloc. If there are higher tariffs on the import of European cars, these cars would become more expensive. This would benefit U.S. car manufacturers.

At the same time, consumers in the U.S. have been importing cheaper goods from countries such as China. They imported over $35 billion worth of smartphones in 2023 from China. If the higher tariffs proposed by Mr. Trump come into force, consumers will need to look for alternatives. This means that they will spend more on these products.

This means manufacturers will benefit, but not consumers.

Mr. Trump's solution to bridge the EU's trade deficit with the U.S. is also questionable: he has asked the bloc to buy more oil and gas from the U.S. By the end of 2023, the EU had sourced close to 43% of its Liquefied Natural Gas needs from the U.S. Just three years before that, in 2020, the EU had sourced below 20% from the U.S. **(Chart 2)**. This means that the EU's dependency on the U.S. had more than doubled in just three years. This was because sanctions were imposed on Russia after it invaded Ukraine. Thus, import of gas from Russia had to be cut, which benefited the U.S.

In July 2024, the EU sourced close to 15% of its crude oil from the U.S. compared to just 8% in July 2020. In the same period, crude oil imports from Russia were reduced from 23% to 2% **(Chart 3)**. So, the question is, why is Mr. Trump threatening the EU when the bloc's dependency on the U.S. for oil and gas is already increasing at a rapid pace?

The U.S. exported 31.8% of its crude oil production in 2023 compared to just 18.7% five years prior. It exported 16% of its natural gas production in 2023 compared to 9.6% five years prior **(Chart 4)**. Are producers in the U.S. equipped to sustainably increase production if the export share increases further, given that the U.S. is also the biggest consumer of oil and natural gas domestically?

Finally, of all the top 10 oil refineries (in terms of processing capacity) that operate in Europe, most are owned by private players **(Chart 5)**. While Mr. Trump's tirade is directed against the governments in Europe, will the bloc be able to convince the private refineries, whose best interest is to choose the cheapest and most viable oil, to get supply from the U.S.?

Shifting the balance

The data for the charts were sourced from Eurostat, the U.S. Energy Information Administration, and the International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Chart 1: The chart shows the U.S.'s trade deficit with select countries at the end of 2023. Values in billion USD

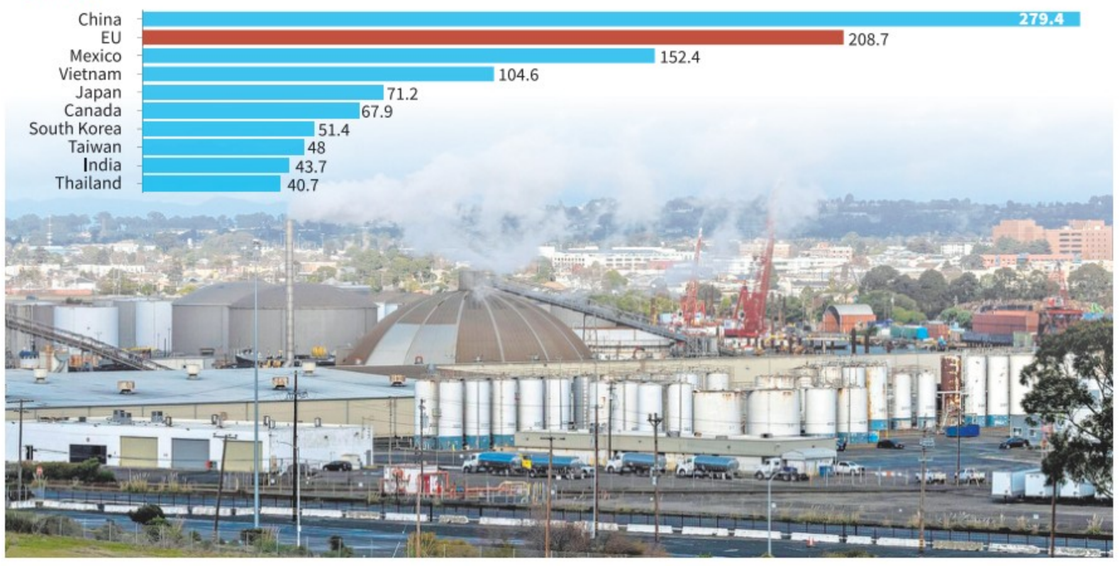


Chart 2: The chart shows EU's imports of liquefied natural gas from the U.S. and Russia. (Figures in %)

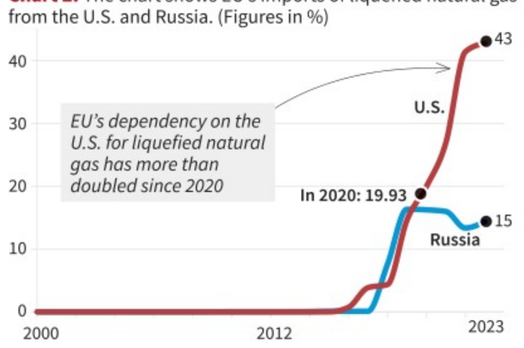


Chart 3: The chart shows EU's crude oil imports from the United States and Russia. (Figures in %)

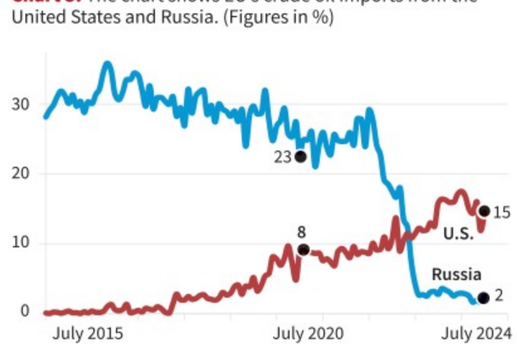


Chart 4: The chart shows the U.S.'s exports of crude oil and natural gas as a share of production. (Figures in %)

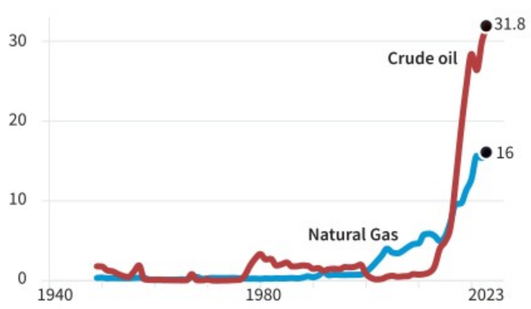
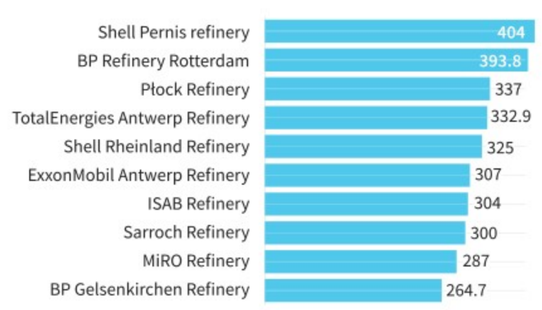


Chart 5: The chart shows the largest crude oil refineries in Europe by capacity (in thousand barrels per day)



FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO JANUARY 13, 1975

Idol made plaintiff in Sivapuram Nataraja case

Los Angeles, Jan. 12: A religious idol allegedly stolen from India has become a plaintiff in a $5.5 million suit to wrest it from a millionaire industrialist and art collector, Mr. Norton Simon.

The complaint in the case was amended on Friday to include the idol – the Sivapuram Nataraja – after the Government of India said that under Indian law the idol is a "juristic person... thereby entitled to own property and may sue or be sued to vindicate its rights."

The complaint, filed by the American Civil Liberties Union against Mr. Simon, seeks return of the idol or $5.5 million if it is not returned. The suit originally asked for $2.5 million in lieu of the idol.

The suit contends that Mr. Simon knew the idol had been stolen when he bought it for a million dollars in 1973 from a New York art dealer.

"The whole thing on the part of the Indian government is rather preposterous," Mr. Simon said. "The piece was in a private collection in Bombay for years... it was shown to Government officials, there is printed literature describing it... and all these years they did nothing."

However, the collector said, "I think there is a grave question as to whether it was ever stolen, and if it was, why (the Indian government) were inactive all the years it was in a private collection. There was certainly no reason to consider it anything but perfectly appropriate from our standpoint to purchase the piece."

The idol is at present in the care of a woman in London, who was given the art object to restore it. A British court has ordered her not to dispose of the idol until its actual owner is determined.

The amended complaint said the suit was also launched on behalf of "the worshippers of Nataraja who have been deprived of their right of worship, and therefore, deprived of their right of freedom of religion."

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FROM THE JANUARY 12, 1925 EDITION AS THERE WAS NO EDITION ON JANUARY 13, 1925

New invention in telegraphy

Paris, Jan. 11: A Havas Agency message says the *Matin* announces that a young French engineer has invented an apparatus by means of which radio-telegrams could be printed instead of read at sound.

From Page One

ISRO succeeds in nudging two satellites closer

"SpaDeX Docking Update: At 15m we see each other clearer and clearer, we are just 50 feet away for an exciting handshake," the agency posted. It released photos and videos of the two satellites.

With this, the ISRO has overcome the setback last week due to an unexpected drift between the satellites, resulting in the postponement of the docking experiment.

On January 8, hours before the experiment was to be carried out, the agency announced its postponement as the drift was more than expected. It later arrested the drift. The docking was initially scheduled for January 7.

Declining fertility levels push up Kerala's MMR

"As part of the Sustainable Development Goals, Kerala was targeting an MMR of 20 by 2030. However, that looks quite unlikely now, given that birth rates are falling steeply. We reckon the State's MMR in 2024-25 has already climbed to 32," says V.P. Paily, a senior consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

"It would now be a herculean task to hold the MMR at 20. Because, while we have successfully addressed all major medical causes of maternal mortality, the issues that are impacting the State's MMR now are not something essentially within our control. We are seeing the impact of demographic changes like low fertility rates, immigration and changing societal attitudes towards marriage and childbirth in Kerala much earlier than we thought we would," Dr. Paily says.

"It has been three decades since the birth rate began falling in Kerala and the steep fall in the number of children born now is part of a larger trend. But the problem is that once the fertility rate comes down, the graph rarely goes up because demographic transition is hard to reverse," says S. Irudaya Rajan, Chairman of the International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD).

Kerala led the demographic transition in the South, attaining the replacement level fertility rate of 2.1 in 1987-88. Replacement level fertility is the average number of children a woman needs to have to replace herself and her generation, so that the population is stable.

The State's total fertility rate (TFR) went below the replacement level in 1991 and remained stagnant at 1.8-1.7 for years, before touching 1.5 in 2020. The current TFR of Kerala (2021 VSR) is 1.46. This means that a couple of reproductive age in Kerala mostly have only one child and sometimes none. It is possible that the TFR will drop to 1.35 once the latest data on live births are accounted for.

"Already, the impact of migration, especially the fact that a chunk of those in the reproductive age group are going abroad for higher education or jobs and choosing to settle down there, and the economic impact of the loss of a young workforce and changing attitudes regarding marriage and fertility are hurting us. In the next 10 years, the proportion of elderly population in Kerala is expected to go above that of children and the magnitude of the issues related to the care and welfare of this population is likely to overwhelm us, even though we have been anticipating it," Dr. Rajan says. But the birth rate is expected to plummet further and the consequences will be starkly evident in the next two decades itself.

Not just declining birth rates, the State is also beginning to see the consequences of a higher age at marriage and delayed childbearing. The proportion of older mothers and the increase in pregnancy-related morbidities in this group and their reproductive health issues are emerging concerns, though the State is yet to adduce hard evidence to substantiate this.

"It has been over 35 years since we attained the replacement level fertility rate and the cohort of those women in the reproductive age of 15-49 we had then has now been replaced by a new cohort. The fertility is low in this new cohort of women, either by will or by nature, so naturally, the number of childbirths will go down. Many in this group choose not to get married or not to have children. And even the number of women in this cohort has begun to dwindle," Sajini B. Nair, social scientist, Population Research Centre, says.

By the Census 2011, the female population in the reproductive age group of 15-49 in Kerala was 93,32,494 and the Registrar-General's projected figure for 2021 was 92,23,500.

Bangladesh summons Indian envoy

"He emphasised that the construction of barbed wire fences without proper authorisation undermines the spirit of cooperation and friendly relations between the two countries. He hoped the upcoming BGB [Border Guard Bangladesh]-BSF DG-level talks would be able to discuss the matter at length," the press note further stated. Earlier Mr. Chowdhury had described India-Bangladesh border agreements concluded during 2010- 2023 as "unequal" and blamed these agreements for being responsible for the problems that Bangladesh is facing.

India and Bangladesh concluded the landmark Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) in 2015 but the killing of Bangladesh citizens by the BSF has been a major issue for Dhaka.

Maha Kumbh begins today with *Shahi Snan*

Lakhs of devotees have gathered in Prayagraj to take a dip at Sangam, marking the start of 45-day event; security measures, AI-enabled surveillance, traffic arrangements in place to manage crowd

The Hindu Bureau
LUCKNOW

Holy dip: People taking bath at the Triveni Sangam, the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati, on the eve of Paush Purnima in Prayagraj on Sunday. SANDEEP SAXENA

The 45-day Maha Kumbh, considered the biggest religious gathering in the world, is set to begin at Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh on Monday with the *Shahi Snan* on the occasion of Paush Purnima at the Sangam, the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati rivers.

All arrangements have been put in place at the Sangam and other banks. Security measures have been strengthened at temples, key sites in the Maha Kumbh Nagar area, and on routes leading to Prayagraj. Intensive checking of vehicles were carried out on Sunday on the seven major roadways connecting Prayagraj and other districts.

Lakhs of devotees are expected to take bath at the Sangam on Monday The Maha Kumbh, being held after 12 years, will conclude on February 26, with over 400 million people expected to visit the event.

Fifty-five police stations have been set up in Maha Kumbh district, with 45,000 police personnel deployed for the event. Seers from 13 *akharas* belonging to different sects are participating in the Maha Kumbh.

Prayagraj city has been adorned with drawings depicting different aspects of Hinduism. Barricades have been put up at various crossroads and trisections for better crowd management. An Integrated Command and Control Centre monitors every activity across Maha kumbh, complemented by AI-enabled cameras for enhanced surveillance.

In a first, an underwater drone has been deployed for the safety of the devotees, which is capable of monitoring every activity under the water 24 hours a day, officials said.

Inspector-General of Police (Eastern Zone), Rajiv Narayan Mishra, said the drone, which functions at a very high speed, can keep an eye on the target even in the dark and do reconnaissance up to a depth of 100 metres.

Also, PAC, NDRF and SDRF teams will be deployed on 700 flagged boats to ensure the safety of the devotees, along with the placing of remote life-saving buoys on a large scale, he said.

In view of the Paush Purnima and Makar Sankranti festivals, the Prayagraj traffic police have devised a comprehensive plan to ensure smooth movement and safety of devotees visiting the Kumbh Mela area.

(With PTI inputs)

Jaishankar to attend Trump's swearing-in on January 20 in U.S.

Kallol Bhattacherjee
NEW DELHI

S. Jaishankar

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has been invited to represent the Government of India at the swearing-in of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on January 20.

Mr. Trump has invited several heads of government and heads of state to be present at the event and the subsequent celebrations that are to be held in Washington D.C.

"On the invitation of the Trump-Vance Inaugural Committee, External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar will represent the Government of India at the Swearing-in Ceremony of President-elect Donald J. Trump as the 47th President of the United States of America," the External Affairs Ministry announced on Sunday.

Mr. Jaishankar visited the U.S. from December 24 to 29, when he met officials from the Biden administration and Congressman Michael Waltz, who has been chosen by Mr. Trump to be his National Security Adviser.

Global interest

The swearing-in of the second Trump administration has been of much global interest since it came to light that Chinese President Xi Jinping has been invited to participate in the event. Since winning the presidential election in November 2024, Mr. Trump has met several global leaders like President Emmanuel Macron of France and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine. There was speculation about a possible invite for Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his swearing-in. However, sources clarified to *The Hindu* that Mr. Jaishankar was invited by name.

Mr. Jaishankar, during his visit to the U.S., will also hold several meetings with officials of the incoming administration, where issues of concern to India are expected to feature. The interactions will be an opportunity to explore the possibility of hosting Mr. Trump in India during the upcoming fifth Quad leaders' summit, which India is in charge of hosting.

Water inflow affects Assam mine rescue operations; five workers remain trapped

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Race against time: Rescue operation under way for the labourers trapped in the Umrangso coal mine in Dima Hasao on Sunday. ANI

The water level in the flooded rat-hole mine in Dima Hasao district of Assam remained unchanged, affecting the operations on Sunday to rescue the remaining five miners trapped beneath since January 6.

Between January 8 and January 11, divers of the Navy, the Army, and the National Disaster Response Force retrieved four bodies of miners, one of them from Nepal. The other three were from different parts of Assam.

"The rescue workers did not recover any bodies today (Sunday) and the water level did not drop. We think this was because of the inflow of water from fissures in the mine," Dima Hasao's District Commissioner, Simanta K. Das, told *The Hindu*.

Officials said the operations to locate the trapped miners would resume on Monday.

"Water is being pumped out from the ill-fated mine and three abandoned mines in the vicinity with nine pumps," an official entrusted with draining the mines said.

Meanwhile, the Opposition parties have mounted pressure on the BJP-led Assam government to come clean on rat-hole mining in the State despite an April 2014 blanket ban by the National Green Tribunal.

Assam Rifles vacates post in Manipur, denies villagers' allegation of harassment

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

'Crowd turned violent but Assam Rifles personnel used an appropriate and calibrated response'

The Assam Rifles vacated a makeshift post in the Naga-dominated Kamjong district of Manipur on Sunday, a day after a mob destroyed it to protest against alleged frequent "harassment" by the personnel of the paramilitary force during the transportation of timber for house construction.

A senior district official said the decision to vacate the post at Hongbei village was reached during a meeting attended by a Brigadier of the Assam Rifles, the Kamjong Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police, and civil society organisations of the Tangkhul Naga community.

"Some 20 personnel vacated the Hongbei post after the meeting," a senior district officer said, declining to be quoted.

The Assam Rifles personnel intercepted a timber-laden vehicle on Saturday, triggering protests from the villagers. A mob gathered in no time and destroyed the post after accusing the paramilitary force of overstepping its authority by interfering in matters of the State Forest Department. Leishiyo Keishing, MLA , told Assam Rifles personnel that "it is not your duty" when the post commander told him the timber should not be used commercially.

The Assam Rifles refuted the charges that its personnel often harassed the villagers. "On January 11, Assam Rifles personnel manning the post at Hongbei inspected a vehicle and discerned that the vehicle loaded with timber did not have mandated documents. Assam Rifles personnel stopped the vehicle following procedures," the Assam Rifles said.

It said "nefarious elements" instigated the local people to force the personnel to release the vehicle. It added that the crowd turned violent but the Assam Rifles personnel used an appropriate and "calibrated response".

On Sunday, the Southern Tangkhul Naga Union "advised" Naga village authorities, a women's union, and youth organisations not to allow the Assam Rifles personnel to pass through areas within their jurisdictions.

Security forces gun down five Naxalites in Chhattisgarh

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIPUR

Security forces gunned down five Naxalites, including two women, in an encounter in Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh on Sunday, the police said.

The encounter took place in the Indravati National Park area.

According to Inspector-General of Police (Bastar Range) P. Sundarraj, a joint team of personnel belonging to the District Reserve Guard, Special Task Force, and District Force was out on an anti-Naxal operation when the gunfight began. "On Sunday, from early morning, there was intermittent encounter between the security forces and the Naxalites in the forest of Bandepara-Koranjed, which lasted till 3-4 p.m. Later, during the search from the spot, the bodies of two women and three men, i.e. five Maoists in uniform were recovered," said Mr. Sundarraj.

One SLR, a 12 bore gun, two single-shot rifles, one BGL launcher, a country-made gun, explosives, and Maoist literature were also recovered from the encounter site, the police added.

In the first 12 days of 2025, the forces have killed 14 Maoists in Chhattisgarh.

In a separate incident, two security personnel were injured in an IED blast, allegedly triggered by Maoists, in Bijapur.

Centre's wildlife panel clears oil and gas exploratory drilling in Assam sanctuary

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Vedanta Group has given an assurance that no commercial drilling will be conducted.

The Centre's wildlife panel has approved a proposal to carry out oil and gas exploration in the ecosensitive zone of the Hoollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam's Jorhat district.

The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL), chaired by Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav, approved the proposal by Vedanta Group's Cairn Oil and Gas during its meeting on December 21, according to the minutes of the meeting.

Assam's Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden had recommended clearance for the project last August, citing "national interest".

The Forest Advisory Committee of the Union Environment Ministry had also granted in-principle approval during its meeting on August 27 last year.

According to the minutes of the NBWL meeting, a team comprising officials from the Union Environment Ministry, the Wildlife Institute of India, and the Assam Forest Department inspected the project site, located about 13 km from the sanctuary.

The inspection committee found that exploratory drilling would cause minimal damage, but said commercial drilling would not be allowed. Vedanta Group has given a written assurance that no commercial drilling will be conducted at the site. It also assured that no hazardous substances would be used during the exploration process, the officials said.

Three women critical after being given 'expired' saline

The Hindu Bureau
KOLKATA

The health condition of three women who fell ill at the Midnapore Medical College and Hospital allegedly due to the administration of expired intravenous fluids remained critical.

The officials of West Bengal Health Department have decided to shift the patients to a Kolkata facility on Sunday. A 13-member team of experts had visited the hospital on Saturday to look into allegations of expired saline being administered to pregnant women and other patients.

The Congress on Sunday held the West Bengal government responsible for the incident.

Youth power will make India a developed nation, says Modi

He advises younger generation to step out of comfort zone, take risks and lists steps taken to empower them; addressing Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue, PM says goal of developed India by 2047 requires daily targets and consistent efforts

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the youth would drive progress and make India a developed nation. Setting big goals and achieving them within a time frame was not impossible, and the country was working with that mindset, he said.

Addressing the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue, 2025, held on the occasion of National Youth Day, Mr. Modi said the goal of a developed India by 2047 required daily targets and consistent efforts.

He advised the youth to step out of their comfort zones and take risks, as demonstrated by the participants of the Young Leaders Dialogue. He reiterated his commitment to bringing one lakh young people into politics.

Engaging the next generation: Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacting with a participant during his visit to an exhibition at the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue in New Delhi on Sunday. ANI

PM's vision

Sharing his vision, Mr. Modi said that in a developed India, both economy and ecology would flourish, and the country would have the world's largest skilled youth workforce.

"Global agencies recognise the youth's potential to significantly boost India's GDP," he said, noting that the Indian youth were leading major global companies. He said the next 25 years – the "Amrit Kaal" – were crucial, and expressed confidence that the youth would realise the dream of a developed India.

On the steps taken by the government to empower them, Mr. Modi said every week a new university and every day a new ITI was being established, while every third day an Atal Tinkering Lab was opened and two new colleges were established daily. India now had 23 IITs, and in the past decade, the number of IIITs had increased to 25 from nine, while the number of IIMs had risen to 21 from 13. There was a three-fold increase in the number of AIIMS and near doubling of medical colleges in the past decade. The number of higher education institutes in the QS rankings had risen to 46 from nine in 2014, he said.

He acknowledged that while the goal of a developed India was significant, it was not impossible.

Overcoming crisis

Citing the example of the economic crisis in the United States in the 1930s, Mr. Modi said the Americans chose the "New Deal" and not only overcame the crisis but also accelerated their development. Singapore, which faced basic life crises, transformed into a global financial and trade hub through discipline and collective effort. India also had similar examples, such as the freedom struggle and overcoming the food crisis post-Independence.

About India's commitment to green energy, Mr. Modi said India was the first country to meet the Paris Agreement commitments nine years ahead of schedule. He said the country was set to achieve the target of 20% ethanol blending in petrol well before the deadline of 2030.

While highlighting the ambitious goal of hosting the Olympics in the next decade, he said India was making rapid strides as a space power, with plans to establish a space station by 2035. He said achieving such goals would pave the way for a developed India by 2047.

He also interacted with youth at an exhibition and witnessed their innovative ideas. He saw 10 presentations on topics ranging from sustainable development and manufacturing to integrating technology with agriculture. Around 3,000 young leaders from across the country participated in the event.

MVA is united, decision on local body polls made to strengthen party, says Raut

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

With the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) announcing its decision to contest the upcoming local body elections independently, discussions are on about the cohesion of the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) and Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance.

However, party leaders have said the move does not signify the dissolution of the alliances.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut underlined on Sunday that while the MVA had been established for the Maharashtra Assembly election and the INDIA bloc for the Lok Sabha polls, local body elections required a distinct approach aimed at empowering party workers. "Local body elections are about strengthening our organisation at the grassroots level," he said. "Neither I nor my party have ever called for the disbanding of the MVA or INDIA bloc."

Mr. Raut further defended the decision, and pointed to limited opportunities for party workers within alliances and the need for organisational growth. He also encouraged MVA allies to prioritise booth-level strategies to enhance their respective organisations. "We have ample time, as the next Lok Sabha and Maharashtra Assembly elections are still four-and-a-half years away," he said.

Sanjay Raut

Ambadas Danve, Leader of the Opposition in the Maharashtra Legislative Council, emphasised the unity within the MVA despite the Shiv Sena (UBT)'s independent strategy for the local elections. "The MVA is intact, but the dynamics of local body elections are different," Mr. Danve told presspersons in Pune.

He accused the ruling Mahayuti alliance of trying to destabilise the MVA but expressed confidence that these attempts would not succeed.

On sarpanch's murder

Both Mr. Raut and Mr. Danve criticised the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance, particularly its handling of law and order in Maharashtra. Mr. Danve alleged that Nationalist Congress Party leader and State Minister Dhananjay Munde was involved in shielding criminals linked to the murder of Santosh Deshmukh, the sarpanch of Massajog village in Beed district.

Mr. Deshmukh was allegedly abducted, tortured, and murdered on December 9 for opposing an extortion attempt targeting an energy firm. Walmik Karad, an associate of Mr. Munde, has been arrested in connection with the case.

Mr. Danve asked why Mr. Karad had not been charged with murder despite evidence of his involvement.

"The government is protecting criminals," he said.

Silver Notice 'more effective' than MLAT, says CBI Director

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Terming the recently introduced Interpol 'Silver Notice' a "more effective" tool than the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties for gathering information on illicit assets parked offshore, CBI Director Praveen Sood said it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi's idea, which has now been realised.

The notice, aimed at locating illicit assets laundered across borders, is the newest addition to Interpol's suite of eight colour-coded Notices and Diffusions, which enable countries to share alerts and requests for information worldwide.

Conventionally, the information on illicit assets is gathered through MLATs which are treaties between two countries whereby they cooperate to provide and obtain formal assistance in the prevention, suppression, investigation, and prosecution of crime.

Common complaints under MLAT include requests being transferred and lack of response due to a large number of requests.

Atishi

Delhi CM launches crowdfunding campaign

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Highlighting the "honest politics" of the Aam Aadmi Party, Delhi Chief Minister and senior leader Atishi on Sunday launched a crowdfunding campaign to meet her party's campaign expenses for the Delhi Assembly election.

Ms. Atishi is the third top leader to launch such a campaign after senior leader Manish Sisodia and Durgesh Pathak.

"Today, I'm launching a crowdfunding campaign for my election campaign from Kalkaji Assembly constituency. The ₹40 lakh I need to fight the election, I request the people of Delhi and all across the country to come and support me for it," Ms. Atishi said.

She said that if they had taken money from big private schools or companies, they would not have been able to fix the Delhi government's schools or hospitals.

"For a Chief Minister, raising ₹4 lakh through corrupt practices is effortless. Delhi has a budget of ₹75,000 crore, and ₹40 lakh is just 0.005% of it. If I wanted to collect money dishonestly, through corruption, it would have been very easy. But to uphold honest politics, we have always relied on the support of the people of Delhi, and they have consistently stood by us," Ms. Atishi said.

Kejriwal says BJP will demolish all slums in Delhi, challenges Amit Shah

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party chief Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday challenged Union Home Minister Amit Shah, saying he would not contest the February 5 Delhi election, if the latter withdrew all cases registered against slum dwellers in the past 10 years within 24 hours and resettled those evicted.

He said if the Bharatiya Janata Party was voted to power in Delhi, they would demolish all slum clusters. "As soon as the election is over on February 8, this slum will be demolished. They won't even wait for two days," Mr. Kejriwal said at a slum cluster in Shakur Basti of north Delhi.

'Plans made'

"They have made plans for all slums in Delhi. Forget five years, they will demolish all slums in one year. If Delhi's slum dwellers give their vote to the BJP, it will be like signing off on your own suicide. They will kill all of you and take all your slums. They have already made plans to give each slum to private people," he said.

Open challenge: Former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal meeting voters in New Delhi on Sunday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

The Delhi BJP did not respond to Mr. Kejriwal's statements.

Talking about the slum cluster at Shakur Basti, Mr. Kejriwal said that on September 30, tenders for this land were issued by the Railways. "The BJP is so shameless and treacherous. These people [BJP] were going into the '*jhuggis*' and sleeping there, and on December 27, 2024, the [Central government-appointed] Lieutenant-Governor changed the land use of this *jhuggi* camp," the AAP supremo said.

He said that in the past 10 years, the BJP has made three lakh people homeless in Delhi by demolishing slum clusters.

Both the AAP and the BJP were trying to win over the voters in slum clusters.

On Saturday, Mr. Shah, addressing an election rally, promised that if his party won the election, every slum dweller in Delhi would be provided a house under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.

Model slum

Earlier on Sunday, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva visited Nehru Camp in the Patparganj constituency during the BJP's slum outreach campaign. "If the BJP comes to power, we will make this Nehru Camp a model slum in regard to sanitation by January 2026," he said.

"It is regrettable that despite various claims made by Mr. Kejriwal, the earnings of Delhi's poor slum-dwelling families are consumed entirely by electricity bills and the cost of buying water," he said.

Congress promises ₹8,500 per month to unemployed young people in Delhi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday promised to give ₹8,500 per month to educated unemployed youth in Delhi for one year, if it is voted to power, under a scheme called the "Yuva Udaan Yojana" (Youth Apprenticeship Scheme).

This is the third promise of the Congress ahead of the Delhi Assembly election scheduled for February 5. On January 6, the Congress announced the "Pyaari Didi Yojana", promising ₹2,500 a month for women, and on January 8, the party announced the "Jeevan Raksha Yojana" to provide free health insurance of up to ₹25 lakh.

Poll promise: Congress leaders Sachin Pilot and Devender Yadav addressing the media in New Delhi on Sunday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

Making the promise at a press conference on Sunday, AICC general secretary Sachin Pilot said both the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Aam Aadmi Party had "totally ignored" the youth in the past 11 years, when they were busy building the Raj Mahal and Sheesh Mahal, respectively.

He said that the Congress was committed to fulfil its guarantees on coming to power, as people have trust and faith on Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Rahul Gandhi to implement the promises.

Mr. Pilot said it was not a "dole" for idling youth, but a job-oriented stipend to develop and enhance their skills. He said while the government would provide the funds, private companies would engage the registered youth to develop their skills and absorb them.

Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee president Devender Yadav said the Congress had made the announcement on National Youth Day for youth uplift. "The Congress stipend will channel the skills of the youth towards constructive work and give direction to their lives," he said.

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1. Renowned violinist known for his global fusion concerts and author of Raga Harmony, he composed the music for Hey Ram. Name him
2. In 'The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe', which of the Pevensie siblings first enters Narnia?
3. "A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one" is a quote from A Dance With Dragons. Who wrote the book?
*T&C apply.
Scan QR code or visit newsth.live/LFL2025QZ take the quiz. Top 3 winners* every day win gift vouchers.
Answer to yesterday's quiz:
1. Jenny Erpenbeck and Michael Hofmann | 2. Jeeves | 3. Han Kang
Yesterday's Winners:
1. C Uma, Chennai | 2. Arunima T G, Thrissur | 3. Saka Sreepala, Hyderabad

INBRIEF

5,000 youth have shunned Naxalism, says Gadkari

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Sunday said "Naxalism" has declined significantly in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli, as nearly 5,000 youth have quit the outlawed movement, joined the mainstream and got employment. In the next five years, Gadchiroli will become the highest revenue-generating district in Maharashtra, he said at BJP's State-level convention at Shirdi in Ahilyanagar district. Mr. Gadkari appealed to the BJP workers to channel the party's electoral success into meaningful societal transformation. "The victory in the last year's State Assembly polls should lead to the establishment of *surajya* (good governance)," he said. PTI

21-year-old student found dead in IIT-Kharagpur hostel

The body of a third-year undergraduate student was found in a hostel room at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, in the early hours of Sunday. The deceased has been identified as 21-year-old Shaon Malik, a student of the Electrical Engineering Department. The body was discovered in the Azad Hall of Residence. The IIT-Kharagpur issued a statement and expressed condolences. "The police are conducting a thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding Mr. Malik's death. The institute is fully cooperating with the authorities," it said. According to sources, the body was discovered by the parents of the victim, who had come to visit him.

Companies look to localise data storage, telecom tech

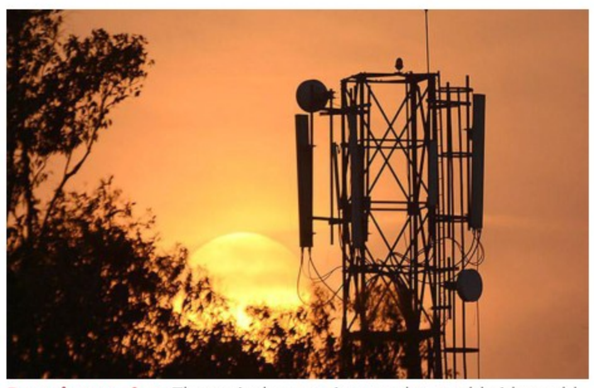
Moving away from China, firms are pushing for producing networking equipment in India; data storage within the country is slowly picking up pace as local servers and data centres come up

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

From data centres to telecom equipment, Indian firms are capitalising on key policy developments to indigenise the Indian tech stack, from both hardware and software point of view. The main movers are emerging from markets that sell to large businesses.

One firm, CloudPhotonix, recently established by veterans of the transceiver industry, has started selling the product to telecom firms, as networks look to move away from foreign, specifically Chinese-made components.

Another firm, DigiBoxx, is offering cloud storage and enterprise backup locally in India, anticipating demand from firms seeking to pre-emptively comply with localisation requirements in the wake of laws such as the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023. While the Act does not currently require data localisation within Indian borders, it leaves that possibility open in some sectors; the Reserve Bank of India requires payment data of Indians to be stored locally.



Booming market: The optical transceiver market worldwide could grow to $47.64 billion by 2035, according to an estimate. FILE PHOTO

Late last year, CloudPhotonix co-founder Tarun Sibal hosted a small event in Delhi gathering academics and industry players, outlining the importance of transceivers, a key component in networking and telecom equipment to transmit and receive data.

Mr. Sibal pointed out that making transceivers and dealing with the science of photonics, which most telcos and data centre firms import into India, was a "dark art", a term that his colleagues repeated in subsequent presentations. They seek to leverage not just the shift away from Chinese technology in telecom networks, which started after the border clashes in 2020, but the growing impulse to make and market the tech locally.

As per an estimate by the Mohali-based Roots Analysis, the optical transceiver market worldwide could grow to $47.64 billion by 2035, over four times its current value.

The firm's CTO, Sunil Khatana, said in a presentation that a significant share of data centre and network infrastructure expenditure was on imported transceivers.

DigiBoxx, meanwhile, bills itself as the "first swadeshi SaaS [Software as a Service]-based digital storage and sharing platform" and its "servers and data centres are based in India, so customers can be assured their digital assets and IP are stored safely in the country", said Arnab Mitra, CEO. Security isn't always a function of the location of data, but over the years, localisation mandates like the RBI's have pushed firms in other industries to seek local storage options, even if they are more expensive due to a lack of scale.

The reason local storage is "becoming an even hotter topic is obviously the rise of privacy", Mr. Mitra said in an interview. He admitted that local storage was more expensive but added that firms looked out for their reputation when making storage decisions for regulatory purposes. "So, it's in many ways priceless," he said.

Union Secretary for Electronics and Information Technology S. Krishnan welcomed the growing introduction of local options in telecom equipment and data storage in an interview with *The Hindu*, saying, "These are commercially driven decisions, and that's the way it ought to be."

Ahead of Budget, CII suggests moves for ease of business

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Budget, industry body Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on Sunday suggested a 10-point agenda to drive ease of doing business reforms, aimed at reducing compliance burden, simplifying regulatory frameworks, and improving transparency.

Among the "urgent policy interventions", it has recommended that all regulatory approvals – Central, State and local levels – must mandatorily be provided only through the National Single Window System.

It has also pitched for expediting the process of dispute resolution by improving the capacity of courts and placing greater reliance on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanism.

For streamlining environmental compliances, the CII said a unified framework could be introduced, which consolidates all requirements into a single document. It also said that States may be incentivised to develop an online integrated land authority with an objective to streamline land banks, digitise and integrate land records, provide information on disputed land and guide necessary reforms.

While India has over the last decade remained focused on improving ease of doing business (EoDB), there is a need to maintain the momentum, especially in certain specific areas, the CII stated.

CII Director-General Chandrajit Banerjee said, "Simplifying regulatory frameworks, reducing compliance burdens, and enhancing transparency should continue to remain our focus agenda for next several years. Compliances for industry related to areas such as land, labour, dispute resolution, paying taxes and environment offer a vast scope for reduction, vital for boosting competitiveness, driving economic growth and employment generation."

Arguing that labour compliances continue to be extensive and arduous and await the implementation of the four labour codes, it called for the scope of the Shram Suvidha Portal, which facilitates integrated compliances in just a few select central Acts, to be expanded to function as a centralised portal for all central and state labour laws compliances.

India-U.S. joint Sonobuoy production line expected to be ready by 2027

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

The final assembly of sonobuoys from the U.S., meant for detecting submarines underwater, will be done in India and an operational production line is expected to be ready in 2027, according to the U.S. company Ultra Maritime. The systems will be co-produced in India in partnership with defence public sector undertaking Bharat Dynamics Ltd. (BDL).

In a significant development, India and the U.S. last week announced the "first-of-its-kind partnership on co-production" of U.S. sonobuoys for Undersea Domain Awareness for the Indian Navy, a high-end technology that allows tracking of submarines in the deep seas and oceans. The announcement was made in the fact sheet issued at the end of U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's visit to India last week.

The systems will be co-produced in India in partnership with defence public sector undertaking Bharat Dynamics Ltd.

"Workshare will be in line with the principles of Make in India. Final assembly will be done in India. Our goal is to have an operational production line in 2027," Ultra Maritime said in response to questions from *The Hindu* sent on email. "These will be U.S.-specification sonobuoys equivalent to those used on the P-8 aircraft."

The chairman of BDL, Commodore A. Madhavarao (retd), had stated that they are looking to set up joint production with Ultra Maritime in Vishakhapatnam.

The U.S.-based company, a world-leader in the design and production of undersea warfare capabilities, has already stated that in line with the U.S.-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (ICET) launched in May 2022, they will also pursue new sonobuoy technologies with BDL teams to optimise their acoustic performance in the unique environment of the Indian Ocean, enabling wide area search through bespoke multi-static active solutions. To a question, the company clarified that this was in addition to the initial production already envisaged.

On the future outlook, Ultra Maritime said it was working with BDL to identify opportunities for Indian suppliers to enter its global supply chain.

An Ultra Maritime statement issued last week had stated that the sonobuoys co-produced in India are interchangeable and interoperable between the U.S. Navy, Indian Navy and allied P-8, MH-60R and the MQ-9B Sea Guardian aircraft.

The development is of particular significance as India has over the years acquired a series of military platforms from the U.S. that are also operated by other countries in the region, especially Australia and Japan, which too are part of the Quad grouping and also hold the Malabar naval exercise. These sonobuoys are dropped from aircraft and helicopters. India is also pursuing another technology - sensors embedded on the ocean bed - and recently some progress has been made as a few Indian start-ups showcased the technology now undergoing trials.

Bengal govt. announces new initiatives to attract pilgrims to Gangasagar Mela

Shiv Sahay Singh
SAGAR (WEST BENGAL)

Competing with the Maha Kumbh at Prayagraj, the organisers of the Gangasagar Mela, held at the confluence of the Ganga with the Bay of Bengal in West Bengal, on Sunday announced a slew of initiatives, including a certificate for pilgrims participating in the annual pilgrimage.

A number of Ministers of the West Bengal government, led by Power Minister Aroop Biswas, held a press conference announcing the Bandhan initiative for pilgrims visiting the site in availing a certificate in three languages.

Other initiatives include the e-Anushandhan (pilgrims can access facilities at the mela ground) and e-Parichay (QR code-enabled identity band) to prevent missing people in the mela crowd. "So far, about 42 lakh pilgrims have visited the island," Mr. Biswas said, expressing hope that the number of pilgrims would cross the record of one crore set in 2023.

Official visit: Aroop Biswas at the Gangasagar Mela. He and his Cabinet colleagues are present at the venue. DEBASISH BHADURI

While claims of the number of pilgrims visiting the ecologically fragile island during the Makar Sankranti festival is contested by Opposition political parties, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been pushing for a "national mela" status for the Gangasagar Mela for several years.

Earlier this month, Ms. Banerjee had said that the Union government supported the Kumbh Mela but did not extend any support to the Gangasagar Mela.

Trinamool Congress Ministers echoed similar sentiments. They questioned why the Gangasagar Mela was not being granted the status of a "national mela".

Mr. Biswas said elaborate arrangements had been made to transport pilgrims from different parts of the State to Sagar Island, including about 2,500 government and private buses, 21 jetties, nine barges, 32 vessels, and 120 launches.

"About 13,000 policemen have been posted to ensure safety and security at the Gangasagar Mela," the Minister said.

The State government also organises 'Ganga Aarti' every year during the mela, much like the event held at the ghats of Varanasi.

This year, the 'Ganga Aarti' is being organised from January 11 to January 13.

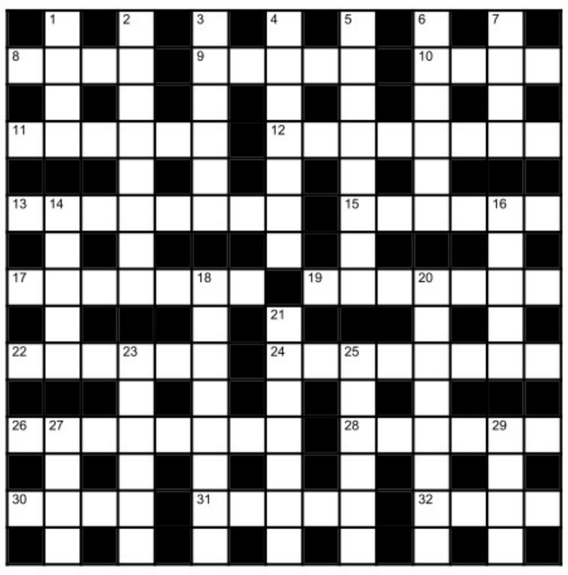
In separate incidents, one person died and two others were airlifted after they fell ill at the Gangasagar Mela.

TH CROSSWORD + 14381

(set by Incognito)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

8 Billionaire captivated by Meloni? (4)
9 Type of note produced by harps (5)
10 Bone in possession of Moghul nawab (4)
11 Free of charge? (6)
12 Wizened woman on skating arena went ahead (8)
13 One may get fir cones from these (8)
15 Require the French pointer (6)
17 Pretended to feed, imbibing gin cocktail (7)
19 Customers' right in courts? (7)
22 / 28 Where pilots and mountaineers may have friends? (2,4,6)
24 Amir lies about points a frequent flier may accumulate (3,5)
26 He can be found in the church waving royal bat (5,3)
28 See 22
30 Circulate rupee endlessly in country (4)
31 Little support by New York (5)
32 E-parrot? (4)

Down

1 In absence of king, obstruct group of countries (4)
2 Putting up with irritated nude call on phone (8)
3 Fly drunken statesmen leaving 'Nam (6)
4 Meet was organised for actress (3,4)
5 Designing an oil pot? It is not mandatory... (8)
6 Collapse fastener (6)
7 Keen to bend joint (4)
14 Canoe may be Indian, for example (5)
16 Machine found in rural Athens (5)
18 Shows old British at sea without right (8)
20 Items are manufactured in countries like Dubai or Abu Dhabi, for example (8)
21 Minerals stop development of stye (7)
23 Legendary flier having one vehicle at university school (6)
25 Gives back money as pyre is destroyed (6)
27 Tells untruth, "Isle is lost" (4)
29 Real tech development (4)

SUDOKU

3				2	6			
6	1						4	2
	7		1					
				4	1	2	7	
1			5		3			6
	6	5	2	8				
					7		2	
8	9						6	3
			3	6				4

No.SS6399 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

D	U	S	T	B	I	N	S		S	P	H	E	R	E
A		U		A		A		G		R		A		N
M	A	G	I	C		G	A	R	R	O	T	T	E	D
U		A		O		S		O		C		U		O
P	A	R	E	N	T		L	O	L	L	I	P	O	P
		S				V		M		A				L
T	U	N	I	C		E	A	S	T	I	N	D	I	A
W		A		A		N		M		M		A		S
E	X	P	E	N	S	I	V	E		S	E	R	U	M
N				D		A		N				E		
T	O	R	T	I	L	L	A		P	A	R	D	O	N
Y		A		D		S		H		R		E		A
S	U	B	M	A	R	I	N	E		S	E	V	E	N
I		B		T		N		R		O		I		N
X	F	I	L	E	S		D	O	W	N	P	L	A	Y

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

5	1	9	8	3	4	6	2	7
4	2	3	9	6	7	5	8	1
7	8	6	5	2	1	4	9	3
1	6	8	4	9	5	3	7	2
2	5	4	3	7	8	1	6	9
9	3	7	6	1	2	8	5	4
3	4	5	2	8	9	7	1	6
6	7	2	1	5	3	9	4	8
8	9	1	7	4	6	2	3	5

FAITH

Message of Lohri festival

Lohri is a precursor to the festivals of Maghi, Pongal and Bihu throughout India. It marks the movement of the Sun away from Makar (Capricorn) to the north signifying the last day of the month of Paush. Offering thanksgiving to the Sun God, Lohri heralds the beginning of the end of the dark bleak dreary winters and the beginning of warm days, said Prof. Kumool Abbi. Spiritually, the inner darkness is dispelled.

Anthropologically it is related to the agricultural calendar. It heralds the harvesting of the Rabi crops. A bonfire is lit and oblations are offered to the sacred fire. '*Aadr aaye dalidhar jaye* (may honour come and poverty vanish)' in the form of sesame, peanuts, popcorn, puffed rice and jaggery.

Throughout history, fire has been venerated as power and associated with purity, luminescence and glow. Cosmologically the fire has an intimate cultural connection with the institutions of family and kinship, the rituals, customs, ceremonies of birth, marriage and death which invoke Agni. Linked to the solar calendar, Lohri, like Pongal, is a very significant religious and cultural festival. It signifies abundance, bounty, prosperity, fertility symbolising joy, brightness, warmth, continuity, copiousness and the community spirit. The fire is considered to be animate, alive and pure.

A solemnisation of marriage or the birth of a male child is celebrated. However, with modern values and education of daughters, Lohri has also become a new custom. The Sikh religion commemorates the sacrifice of the 40 muktas at the Maghi Mela at Muktsar.

BSE expects IPO run to continue unabated in 2025: CEO

MARKETMUSINGS

Reuters
MUMBAI

India's record-breaking capital-raising spree will continue in 2025 given the strong pipeline of firms looking to go public, the head of the country's oldest exchange told *Reuters*.

"There are 90-plus companies that have already filed their draft prospectus with the regulator, looking to raise an estimated ₹1 trillion ($11.65 billion) at some point this year," Sundararaman Ramamurthy, the CEO of BSE said.

Last year, 91 large firms went public on the BSE, earlier known as the Bombay Stock Exchange, and the NSE, or National Stock Exchange, raising a record 1.6 trillion rupees via initial public offerings (IPOs), according to analytics firm Prime Database.

Overall public equity fundraising more than doubled to ₹3.73 trillion.

Mr. Ramamurthy said the IPO boom has more Offers for Sale (OFS), where large shareholders sell existing shares, with the proceeds going to them, instead of fresh issues that provide firms with capital to invest.

"I would like to see the OFS percentage coming down and fresh capital raising go up."

BSE earned ₹1.57 billion in listing fees in the first-half of 2024-25, according to East India Securities. This compares to ₹1.3 billion in fees reported a year earlier.

Mr. Ramamurthy declined to comment on BSE's financials ahead of its upcoming quarterly earnings.

The gains from the IPO pipeline, however, are being tempered by tighter rules for trading derivatives.

The notional value of derivatives traded in India has declined 40% since September, in anticipation of the new rules, while premiums have fallen 15%-20%, Mr. Ramamurthy said.

A further decline could be expected since three of the six new rules introduced by the markets regulator will be implemented by April.

"We have to wait till April to judge the final impact," Mr. Ramamurthy said.

BSE's shares have doubled since Nov. 20 when the rules were implemented as analysts expect a lower impact on the exchange compared to the NSE, which has larger derivative trading volumes.

BSE, which earns a major chunk of revenue from transaction charges and services to firms including listings, is looking to diversify its income streams, Mr. Ramamurthy said.

It aims to grow its index business, which licences indexes used by funds to benchmark investments.

"We have launched 15 indices since the middle of last year and there is room to continue working on that front," he said.

It is also considering expanding its co-location services, which are in demand as high-frequency and algorithmic trading increase.

"There is good possibility of generating revenue (in co-location), but we have not made a decision yet. We will look at it after April once market volumes settle down."

Send queries on personal finance and investing to the moneywise@thehindu.co.in ID. Our experts in personal finance will respond to select queries, but will not give specific recommendations for investment in a particular mutual fund, share or fixed deposit.

Correction

The article *"Uninsured two-wheelers are a major safety concern"*, published on this page on January 6, had erroneously stated that 'The maximum compensation is ₹7.5 lakh for third-party death or property damage.' It should have stated: 'The maximum compensation for a third party death is decided by the court, and the maximum compensation for third party property damage in the case of bike insurance is ₹1 lakh.' The error is regretted.

Less taxing: Hybrid funds with allocation of more than 65% of portfolio to equity, are equity funds for tax purposes.GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

All about the utility of hybrid mutual funds

If you want to maintain equity exposure at a certain level, you may pick a hybrid fund; SEBI has set ranges and within these, there is tracking and rebalancing by the fund manager

MIX AND MATCH

Joydeep Sen

When we think of mutual funds (MFs), we think of equity funds. There are also hybrid funds with their own utility. These funds can add to tax efficiency. To recap, taxation of equity funds, for a holding period of more than one year, is 12.5% plus surcharge and cess. For a holding period of less than one year, it is 20% plus surcharge and cess. For debt funds, it is your marginal slab rate, irrespective of the holding period. For most investors, it is 30% plus surcharge and cess. Hybrid funds with allocation of more than 65% of portfolio to equity, are equity funds for tax purposes. In the process, the debt component of the fund also gets taxed at a lower rate i.e. 12.5%. .

> SEBI defines Dynamic Asset Allocation or Balanced Advantage Funds as those with investment in equity/ debt managed dynamically

> Arbitrage Funds earn returns from the price differential between equity stocks in cash market and stock futures market, for 65% of the portfolio

Fund details

There are six hybrid fund categories defined by Securities Exchange Board of India (SEBI). We start with the category called Aggressive Hybrid funds. These funds are mandated to have allocation to equity in the range of 65 to 80% of the portfolio. It is compulsory to have this allocation to equity, hence, this category is just one notch below equity funds. The allocation to debt, 20-35 % of portfolio, leads to lower volatility than pure-play equity funds. Equity allocation being more than 65%of portfolio, taxation is that of equity.

Then there are Balanced Hybrid funds with equity allocation 40-60%. As per rules, an Asset Management Company (AMC) can have either Aggressive or Balanced Hybrid fund not both. Given a fund with over 65% allocation to equity is taxed as equity and investors prefer equity taxation, AMCs have not initiated Balanced Hybrid funds.

SEBI defines Dynamic Asset Allocation or Balanced Advantage Funds (BAFs) as 'investment in equity/ debt that is managed dynamically'.

However, the MF industry has positioned BAF is in a particular manner.

Equity component is maintained at over 65%, to be eligible for equity taxation. A part of the equity exposure is 'hedged'. Hedging is done by taking a contra position i.e. sell/ short position in stock futures. The effect is the net equity exposure, subject to market volatility, is much lower.

As an illustration, let us say the in a BAF with a corpus of ₹100, equity exposure is ₹75 and debt exposure is ₹25. There is a short position in equity of say ₹35. Thus, the net equity exposure is ₹40. The extent of the hedge is decided by the fund manager as per market valuations. The reason to make the net equity exposure lower than the apparent exposure is to make it defensive. If the equity market were to correct, the adverse impact would be to the extent of ₹40 and not ₹75.

In Equity Savings Funds, SEBI norm sets minimum investment in equity and equity-related instruments at 65% of total assets and minimum investment in debt at 10% of total assets.

There has to be an usual or unhedged exposure to equity, and a hedged exposure to equity adding up to minimum 65% of portfolio. The balance portfolio is in debt. The industry practice is the usual equity component is maintained in the range of 20-40%, and so is the hedged portion.

Though Equity Savings Funds are equity funds from a tax perspective, the equity (unhedged) portion in the range of 20- 40%, resembles fixed income or debt-oriented funds.

Arbitrage Funds earn returns from the price differential between equity stocks in cash market and stock futures market, for 65% of the portfolio.

The price at which a stock is sold in the stock futures market is higher than the price at which it is purchased in the cash or spot market. These funds have 65% or more of the portfolio in cash-futures arbitrage and 35% or less in debt or money market instruments. Returns come from price differential between the two segments.

Multi Asset Funds (MAFs) are those with exposure to a minimum of three asset categories and minimum 10% in each category. Here as well, most AMCs run portfolios with equity exposure of over 65% to be eligible for equity taxation. The balance is invested in debt and gold, or some other asset class.

As we can see in the above fund categories, exposure to equity being less than that of pure-play equity funds, you have diversification built in the fund. At the end of the holding period, you may end up with returns less than equity-only funds, but volatility during holding period will be relatively lower.

Conclusion

If you want to maintain equity exposure at a certain level, in a disciplined manner, you may resort to the relevant hybrid fund.

(The writer is a corporate trainer (financial markets) and author.)

Is PPF still attractive?

THINKINVESTOR

You can renew a PPF account till retirement, and each renewal will be for a block of five years after the initial period of 15 years. This makes it an optimal investment for retirement

Venkatesh Bangaruswamy

The new tax regime is the default choice. While tax rates are lower with higher slabs for income under ₹15 lakh, you can no longer claim deduction under Section 80C of the Income-Tax Act. This has led many to wonder about their investments in Public Provident Fund (PPF). Here, we discuss why PPF is still an important part of goal-based portfolios.

Exempt Income

Investments must be evaluated on a post-tax basis. Suppose you consider investing in equity for capital appreciation and in bonds for income returns. Your goal-based investments will attract long-term capital gains tax on equity and your marginal tax rate on income returns.

As the marginal tax rate is higher, you must shield your interest income from taxes. Otherwise, your post-tax expected returns on the portfolio will be significant lower. It is in this context that your investments in PPF becomes important.

Proceeds, Interest exempt

Accrued interest on PPF investment is exempt from I-T as are the proceeds you receive at maturity. This is true even if you are assessed under the new income tax regime.

Therefore, PPF continues to be an attractive investment, even if you cannot avail the deduction of ₹1.5 lakh annually. Note, interest rate on PPF is reset every quarter. So, rates can decline in line with the government bond yields. Yet, tax exemption on interest income is a dominant factor in favour of PPF.

The maximum amount you can invest annually in PPF is ₹1.5 lakh. Most confuse this with the headroom deduction available under Section 80C. Suppose you are in the old tax regime and your provident fund (PF) contribution is ₹50,000.

The misconception is you can invest only ₹1 lakh in PPF, given the ₹1.5 lakh deduction limit under Section 80C. That is not true. You can invest ₹1.5 lakh in PPF. But you can only claim a maximum of ₹1.5 lakh for all your eligible investments under Section 80C including PF and PPF.

Conclusion

You can renew your PPF account till retirement and each renewal will be a block of five years after the initial period of 15 years. This makes PPF an optimal investment for retirement portfolio and for goals with time horizon of 15 years and more.

To benefit from compounding effect, it is optimal to exhaust PPF investments early in a financial year. Individuals with salary income could consider contribution to voluntary PF, as it carries a higher interest rate.

(The author offers training programmes for individuals to manage their personal investments)

Personal Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	Loan amount 1 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
HDFC Bank	10.85-24.00	10,834-14,384	2,167-2,877	Up to Rs 6,500
Tata Capital	11.99 onwards	11,120 onwards	2,224 onwards	Up to 5.5%
State Bank of India	11.45-14.85	10,984-11,856	2,197-2,371	NIL
ICICI Bank	10.85-16.25	10,834-12,226	2,167-2,445	Up to 2%
Bank of Baroda	11.05-18.75	10,884-12,902	2,177-2,580	Up to 2% (Maximum Rs 10,000)
Axis Bank	11.00 onwards	10,871 onwards	2,174 onwards	Up to 2%
Kotak Mahindra Bank	10.99-16.99	10,869-12,424	2,174-2,485	Up to 5%
Bank of India	10.85-16.20	10,834-12,212	2,167-2,442	Up to 1% (Minimum Rs 250 and Maximum Rs 10,000)
Canara Bank	10.95-16.40	10,859-12,266	2,172-2,453	Up to 0.50% (Maximum Rs 2,500)
Punjab National Bank	11.40-17.95	10,971-12,683	2,194-2,537	Up to 1%
HSBC Bank	10.15-16.00	10,660-12,159	2,132-2,432	Up to 2%
Federal Bank	11.49-14.49	10,994-11,762	2,199-2,352	Up to 3%
Union Bank of India	11.35-15.45	10,959-12,013	2,192-2,403	Up to 1% (Maximum Rs 7,500)
Bajaj Finserv	10.00-31.00	10,624-16,485	2,125-3,297	Up to 3.93%
Punjab & Sind Bank	11.25-14.00	10,934-11,634	2,187-2,327	0.50%-1%
South Indian Bank	12.85-20.60	11,338-13,414	2,268-2,683	Up to 2%
UCO Bank	12.45-12.85	11,236-11,338	2,247-2,268	Up to 1% (Minimum Rs 750)
IDFC First Bank	10.99 onwards	10,869 onwards	2,174 onwards	2%
Bank of Maharashtra	10.00-12.80	10,624-11,325	2,125-2,265	1% (Rs 1,000-Rs 10,000)
Karnataka Bank	13.68	11,551	2,310	Up to 2% (Min. Rs 2,500 Max. Rs 8,500)
IndusInd Bank	10.49 onwards	10,744 onwards	2,149 onwards	Up to 3.5%

Car Loans

Rates and Charges		Loan amount 5 lakh Tenure 5 years	(% of loan amount)
Name of Lender	**Interest Rate (%)**	**EMI (Rs)**	**Processing fee**
Union Bank of India	8.70 - 10.45	10,307 - 10,735	NIL
Punjab National Bank	8.75 - 10.60	10,319 - 10,772	Up to 0.25% (Rs. 1,000 - Rs. 1,500)
Bank of Baroda	9.00 - 12.70	10,379 - 11,300	Up to Rs 750
UCO Bank	8.45 onwards	10,246 onwards	Nil
State Bank of India	9.10-10.15	10,403-10,660	NIL
IDBI Bank	8.90-9.70	10,355 - 10,550	Rs 2,500
Bank of Maharashtra*	8.70 - 13.00	10,307 - 11,377	NIL
Indian Overseas Bank**	8.65-9.85	10,294 - 10,587	0.50% (Rs 500 - Rs 5,000)
ICICI Bank	9.10 onwards	10,403 onwards	Up to 2%
HDFC Bank	9.20 onwards	10,428 onwards	Up to 1% (Rs 3,500 - Rs 9,000)
Karnataka Bank	9.13-11.61	10,411 - 11,024	Up to 0.50% (Rs 500 - Rs 5,000)
Federal Bank	8.85 onwards	10,343 onwards	Rs 2,000 - Rs 4,500
Punjab and Sind Bank***	8.85 - 10.25	10,343 - 10,685	0.25% (Rs 1,000-Rs 15,000)
South Indian Bank	8.75 onwards	10,319 onwards	Rs. 1999
IDFC First Bank	9.99 onwards	10,621 onwards	Up to Rs 10,000
City Union Bank	14.45-14.95	11,751-11,882	1.25% (Min: Rs 1,000)

*0.25% interest rate concession for existing housing loan borrowers and corporate salary account holders.
**0.50% interest rate concession to borrowers with credit scores of 800 and above. Interest rate concession of 0.25% to borrowers having credit scores of 750-799
***Concession of up to 50% on processing fee for PSB Apna Vahan Sugam.

Rates and charges as on January 8 **Source: Paisabazaar.com**

MANILA

Philippines deploys coast guard ship to counter China patrols

AFP

The Philippines said on Sunday it had deployed a coast guard ship to challenge Chinese patrol boats attempting to "alter the existing status quo" of the disputed South China Sea. Manila said Chinese patrol ships had this year come as close as 111 km west of the main Philippine island of Luzon. AFP

ISLAMABAD

Malala slams Taliban for instituting 'gender apartheid' against women

REUTERS

Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai slammed the Taliban for instituting a system of "gender apartheid" against women by disguising their crimes in the cloak of culture and religion. "The Taliban do not see women as human beings. These policies are a violation of human rights," she said while speaking on girls' education in Islamabad. PTI

SEOUL

South Korea's Yoon will not attend first impeachment hearing

AFP

South Korea's suspended President Yoon Suk Yeol will not attend the first hearing of his impeachment trial next week because of safety concerns, his lawyer said. The Constitutional Court has scheduled five trial dates spanning January 14 to February 4, which will proceed in his absence if he does not attend. AFP

ZAGREB

Croatia's President Milanovic is the favourite to win run-off elections

REUTERS

Croatia's incumbent President Zoran Milanović, left, was the favourite to win reelection as he faced Dragan Primorac from the ruling conservative party in a run-off on Sunday. The left-leaning Milanovic comfortably won the first round on December 29. He fell short of securing 50% of the vote by just 5,000 votes. AFP

Saudi Arabia calls for lifting Syria curbs at talks with EU

The meeting also included officials from West Asia and the UN; German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock wants a 'smart approach' that would enable aid to reach Syrians

Agence France-Presse
RIYADH

Saudi Arabia on Sunday called for the lifting of sanctions on Syria after meetings with top diplomats from West Asia and Europe that focused on the war-ravaged country's future.

The Gulf kingdom is seeking to increase its influence in Syria after Islamist-led militants toppled longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad last month, analysts say.

"We stressed the importance of lifting unilateral and international sanctions imposed on Syria, as their continuation hinders the aspirations of the Syrian people to achieve development and reconstruction," Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said after Sunday's talks concluded in Riyadh.

Way out: Saudi Arabia hosts top diplomats from West Asia and Europe to discuss Syria in Riyadh on Sunday. AFP

The agenda included a meeting of Arab officials as well as a broader gathering that also included Turkiye, France, the European Union and the UN.

The European Union's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, said on Friday that the 27-nation bloc could begin lifting sanctions if Syria's new rulers took steps to form an inclusive government that protected minorities.

European Foreign Ministers are due to meet on January 27 to discuss the issue, she said.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said in Riyadh that her government wanted a "smart approach" that would enable aid to reach Syrians.

Firefighters scramble to contain Los Angeles fires

Agence France-Presse
LOS ANGELES

Firefighters battled on Sunday to get on top of massive wildfires around Los Angeles as winds ramped up, pushing the blazes toward previously untouched neighbourhoods.

At least 16 persons were confirmed dead from fires that have ripped through the city, leaving communities in ruins and testing the mettle of thousands of firefighters – and millions of California residents.

Despite heroic efforts, including precision sorties from aerial crews, the Palisades Fire continued to grow, pushing east and north to the densely populated San Fernando Valley.

A brief lull in the wind was rapidly giving way to gusts that forecasters warned would feed the blazes for days to come.

No respite: A fire-fighting helicopter at work near the Mandeville Canyon neighbourhood in California on Saturday. AFP

"Critical fire-weather conditions will unfortunately ramp up again today for southern California and last through at least early next week," the National Weather Service said. "This may lead to the spread of ongoing fires as well as the development of new ones."

The Palisades Fire was 11% contained on Saturday but had grown to 23,600 acres, while the Eaton Fire was at 14,000 acres and 15% contained.

Trump calls California leaders 'incompetent'

Agence France-Presse
LOS ANGELES

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump accused California officials on Sunday of incompetence over their handling of deadly wildfires raging around Los Angeles.

"The fires are still raging in L.A. The incompetent pols (politicians) have no idea how to put them out," Mr. Trump said on his Truth Social platform.

With just over a week before he returns to the White House, Mr. Trump has launched a series of evidence-free broadsides accusing California's Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom of failings in response to the blazes.

Yunus asks U.K. to probe 'graft scandal' of Hasina's niece

Press Trust of India
DHAKA

Chief Advisor says Tulip Siddiq may have acquired properties unlawfully during Hasina regime

"Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus has called for an investigation into the properties of British Minister Tulip Siddiq and her family, indicating that they may have acquired them through unlawful means during her aunt Sheikh Hasina's tenure as Bangladesh premier," reports said on Sunday.

In an interview with the *Times* newspaper, Mr. Yunus condemned the use of properties gifted to Ms. Siddiq and her family by "allies of her aunt's deposed regime". He demanded the return of the assets to Bangladesh if she is found to have benefited from "plain robbery."

Ms. Siddiq, a member of Britain's Labour Cabinet, serves as the Economic Secretary to the Treasury and City Minister, responsible for addressing corruption within the U.K.'s financial markets.

Italy's Justice Minister asks court to release Iranian man held on U.S. warrant

Associated Press
ROME

Italy's Justice Minister has asked an appeals court to revoke the arrest of an Iranian citizen wanted by the U.S. over a drone attack in Jordan that killed three Americans a year ago.

Mohammad Abedini was scheduled to appear at a Milan court on Wednesday in connection with his bid for house arrest pending the extradition process to the U.S.

Iransaid Mr. Abedini will return to Iran "within hours." The report said the release and return of Mr. Abedini came after Iran's Foreign Ministry pursued the case with Italy.

Quid pro quo: Italian journalist Cecilia Sala, believed to have been held as a bargaining chip, had returned home last week. REUTERS

Mr. Abedini was arrested based on a U.S. warrant on December 16, three days before Italian journalist Cecilia Sala was detained while on a reporting trip to Iran. Ms. Sala, who was believed to have been held as a bargaining chip for Mr. Abedini's release, returned home last week, giving rise to speculation about his fate.

Finer details

The Justice Ministry on Sunday said that under Italy-U.S. extradition treaties, "only crimes that are punishable according to the laws of both sides can lead to extradition, a condition which, based on the state of documents, can't be considered as existing."

The potential charge against Mr. Abedini – criminal association for violating the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, a U.S. federal law – "did not correspond to any conduct recognised by Italian law as a crime."

Myanmar junta air strike kills 15 civilians, says rebel group

Agence France-Presse
BANGKOK

A Myanmar junta air strike killed at least 15 civilians and wounded 10 others at a market in a gold-mining area in northern Kachin state, a spokesman for an ethnic rebel group that controls the area said on Sunday.

The junta has been accused of carrying out multiple attacks on civilian targets as it struggles to quell resistance to its 2021 coup.

The latest attack happened around 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, Colonel Naw Bu, a spokesperson from the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), said.

"All those killed were civilians including gold miners and local shopkeepers," he said.

The KIA, which can call on around 7,000 fighters, has been battling the military for decades for autonomy and control of local resources in Kachin State.

The State is home to huge jade mines and rare heavy earth elements, most of which are exported to China. Naw Bu said the attack took place in a mining area in Tanaing Township, in the western part of the State.

Sport

Jemimah's century sets up series win for India

IRELAND IN INDIA

Press Trust of India
RAJKOT

A collective batting performance headlined by Jemimah Rodrigues' maiden hundred ensured India's commanding 116-run win against Ireland in the second women's ODI here on Sunday as the hosts took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

India scored a massive 370 for five riding on three half-centuries and a ton before restricting Ireland to 254 for seven in the stipulated 50 overs.

Skipper Smriti Mandhana was the first off the blocks with an attacking 73 off just 54 balls, while Jemimah (102 off 91) ensured a smooth finish for the hosts.

Newcomer Pratika Rawal (67 off 61 balls) and the seasoned Harleen Deol (89 off 84 balls) also made merry against a sub-par bowling attack.

Star turn: Jemimah finally got the monkey off her back with a maiden ODI ton. FILE PHOTO: VIJAY SONEJI

Ireland batted steadily but never had the firepower to surpass a gigantic total.

Save Christina Coulter Reilly's 80, there wasn't much fight from the other batters as off-spinner Deepti Sharma emerged the pick of the Indian bowlers with three for 37.

Earlier, India's total was based on two big stands – 156 off 19 overs between Smriti and Pratika and 183 off 28 overs between Jemimah and Harleen.

Carnage

In all, the Indian batters smashed an astounding 44 boundaries and three sixes in 50 overs.

As far as Jemimah was concerned, her record has been one that flattered to deceive with just six half-centuries across 40 games.

But once she got the boundary off medium pacer Arlene Kelly, the relief was palpable as she did a mock guitar-playing act with her willow.

The scores: India 370/5 in 50 overs (Smriti 73, Pratika 67, Harleen 89, Jemimah 102) beat Ireland 254/7 in 50 overs (Sarah Forbes 38, Christina Coulter Reilly 80, Deepti Sharma 3/37). **Toss:** India: **PoM:** Jemimah. *India won by 116 runs and leads series 2-0.*

Home Run claims the feature event

HYDERABAD: Trainer M. Srinivas Reddy's ward Home Run, ridden by Akshay Kumar, won the Deccan Bookmakers Welfare Association Darley Arabian Million, the feature event of Sunday's (Jan. 12) races. The winner is owned by M/s. Arun Alagappan Racing LLP & Mr. S. Pathy. Akshay Kumar rode two more winners on the day.

1. RED SATIN PLATE (DIV. I) (1,200M): THE PIOUS (Akshay Kumar) 1, Inderdhanush (Deepak) 2, Fashion Icon (Gaurav) 3 and Wandring Warrior (Abhay) 4. 4-3/4, 2-1/2 and 1-1/2. 1m, 12.40s. ₹13 (w), 10, 14 and 17 (p). SHP: 28, THP: 78, SHW: 10 and 24, FP: 38, Q: 38, Tanala: 260. Favourite: The Pious. Owner: Mr. Subodh Kumar Ananthula. Trainer: G. Sandeep.

2. COMMON LAND PLATE (DIV. II) (1,200M): RIVAL (P. Sai Kumar) 1, Golden Gazelle (H.M. Akshay) 2, Happy Soul (Kuldeep Jr.) 3 and Mr. Perfect (Mohit) 4. 2, 2 and 3-3/4. 1m, 11.57s. ₹28 (w), 10, 14 and 29 (p). SHP: 41, THP: 46, SHW: 13 and 20, FP: 113, Q: 45, Tanala: 633. Favourite: Rival. Owner: The United Racing & Bloodstock Breeders Ltd. & Mr. Sanjay R. Goyani. Trainer: K.S.V. Prasad Raju.

3. CHALLURI SUSHEELA & NARASIMHA REDDY MEMORIAL CUP (1,400M): MISS SMILEY ANGEL (H.M. Akshay) 1, N R I Blaze (Kuldeep Sr.) 2, Infinia (Ashad Asbar) 3 and Konaseema (Abhay) 4. Head, 2 and 2. 1m, 26.75s. ₹353 (w), 74, 12 and 13 (p). SHP: 38, THP: 44, SHW: 126 and 18, FP: 3,496, Q: 929, Tanala: 17,638. Favourite: N R I Blaze. Owner: Mr. V. Narendar Reddy. Trainer: G. Shashikanth.

4. RED SATIN PLATE (DIV. II) (1,200M): FIRST LADY (Santosh Raj N.R) 1, Normui (Mukesh) 2, Glimmer Of Hope (Gaurav) 3 and Sargent (H.M. Akshay) 4. 4-1/2, Neck and 1/2. 1m, 12.59s. ₹22 (w), 11, 13 and 52 (p). SHP: 28, THP: 137, SHW: 18 and 33, FP: 58, Q: 30, Tanala: 1,565. Favourite: First Lady. Owners: Mr. G. Krishnamohan Rao, Mr. Prabhakar Chowdary Tripuraneni & Mrs. T. Rohini. Trainer: D. Netto.

5. B. VIJAY REDDY MEMORIAL CUP (1,600M): PEPPI (A. Ashad Asbar) 1, See My Attitude (Afroz K) 2, Bellingham (B.R. Kumar) 3 and Oskars Officer (H.M. Akshay) 4. 2-1/4, 2-3/4 and 1/2. 1m, 41.02s. ₹46 (w), 16, 14 and 17 (p). SHP: 34, THP: 87, SHW: 16 and 11, FP: 157, Q: 75, Tanala: 643. Favourite: Always Special. Owners: Mr. Prabhaker Reddy Solipuram & Mrs. Lingala Aarti Reddy. Trainer: L.V.R. Deshmukh.

6. COMMON LAND PLATE (DIV. I) (1,200M): DARLING'S BOY (Akshay Kumar) 1, Mix The Magic (Mukesh) 2, Amyra (Shivansh) 3 and Calista Girl (Gaurav) 4. 3, Short Head and Neck. 1m, 11.73s. ₹23 (w), 11, 20 and 36 (p). SHP: 100, THP: 81, SHW: 13 and 56, FP: 126, Q: 104, Tanala: 5,018. Favourite: Darling's Boy. Owners: M/s. S. Daljeet Singh, Mohammed Rashed Ali Khan & Aziz Ahmed Khan. Trainer: M.F. Ali Khan.

7. IEME CENTRE ROLLING TROPHY (1,400M): UCHCHAIHSHRAVAS (Neeraj Rawal) 1, Espionage (Kuldeep Sr.) 2, Emperors Charm (Akshay K) 3 and King Best (Gaurav) 4. 3-1/4, 2 and 2-1/2. 1m, 24.45s. ₹23 (w), 13, 15 and 12 (p). SHP: 48, THP: 49, SHW: 13 and 15, FP: 64, Q: 43, Tanala: 198. Favourite: Uchchaihshravas. Owner: Mr. Vara Prasad Reddy. Trainer: N. Rawal.

8. DECCAN BOOKMAKERS WELFARE ASSOCIATION DARLEY ARABIAN MILLION (GR. 3) (1,200M): HOME RUN (Akshay Kumar) 1, Cherie Chevalier (P. Sai K) 2, Pacific Heights (Saqlain) 3 and Smart Operator (Mukesh) 4. 2, 10-1/2 and 2-1/4. 1m, 11.51s. ₹32 (w), 17 and 10 (p). SHP: 18, THP: 41, SHW: 19 and 10, FP: 81, Q: 39, Tanala: 80. Favourite: Cherie Chevalier. Owners: M/s. Arun Alagappan Racing LLP & Mr. S. Pathy. Trainer: M. Srinivas Reddy.

9. RED SATIN PLATE (DIV. III) (1,200M): PETRA ACT (Mukesh Kumar) 1, Dali's Champion (P. Ajeeth K) 2, Golden Inzio (P. Sai K) 3 and Exponent (Md. Ekram) 4. Not run: That's My Mission. 5-1/2, 3/4 and 7-3/4. 1m, 11.69s. ₹83 (w), 22, 10 and 17 (p). SHP: 32, THP: 39, SHW: 87 and 15, FP: 428, Q: 233, Tanala: 952. Favourite: Dali's Champion. Owners: M/s. Boppidi Sham Sunder Reddy, Chandrasekhar Reddy Challuri, Srinivas Rao Thota & Venkata Krishna Reddy Challuri. Trainer: Magan Singh Parmar.

Jackpot: (i) 70%: ₹83,266 (1 tkt.) & 30%: 3,244 (11 tkts.); (ii) 70%: 35,751 (14 tkts.) & 30%: 674 (318 tkts.).

Mini Jackpot: (i) 1,90,717 (1 tkt.), (ii) 5,117 (17 tkts.).

Treble: (i) 1,186 (11 tkts.), (ii) 461 (154 tkts.), (iii) 1,469 (30 tkts.).

IN THE OPEN

Djokovic reveals 'energetic disc' as his new secret weapon

AFP

Novak Djokovic has revealed a new secret weapon that he credits with helping keep him healthy — a green "energetic disc." Known for his new-age spiritual interests, he has a device made by an engineer in Serbia which he claims has helped him deal with several ailments. The 37-year-old showed off the dinner-plate size disc on Instagram.

LOVE-ALL

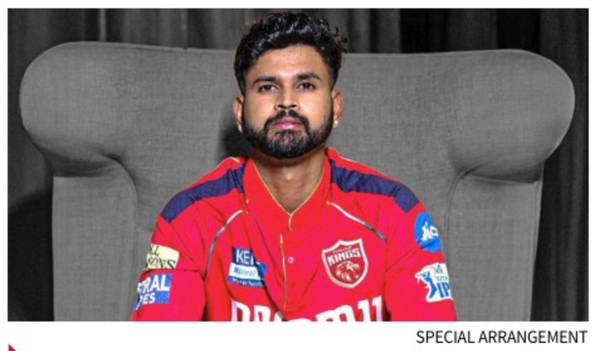
Ruud says proposing to girlfriend topped any Grand Slam final

AFP

Casper Ruud is a three-time Grand Slam finalist, but the World No. 6 admitted his pulse was racing when he went down on one knee to propose to his girlfriend Maria Galligani. Asked if he was more nervous playing Rafael Nadal in the French Open final or asking his fiancee to marry him, he visibly tensed up, stuttering in his on-court interview.

IN THE HOT SEAT

Shreyas is Punjab Kings skipper, aims to deliver team's maiden title



SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

IPL franchise Punjab Kings announced Shreyas Iyer as its captain for the 2025 season. "I am honoured that the team has reposed its faith in me. I am looking forward to working again with coach Ricky Ponting. I hope to repay the faith shown by the management by winning our maiden title," said Shreyas.

TRIPLE DELIGHT

Jamshedpur FC outclasses Mumbai City, climbs to third spot

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Jamshedpur FC defeated Mumbai City FC 3-0 in an ISL match in Mumbai on Sunday to move to third spot, courtesy its ninth win. The visiting team converted all of the three shots it took on target into goals. **The result:** Mumbai City FC 0 lost to Jamshedpur FC 3 (Mohd Sanan 64, Jordan Murray 86 *(in pic)*, Hernandez 90+6).

Toofans blow away the Lancers' challenge

Peillat nets two goals as the Hyderabad franchise comes from behind to register a 5-1 win; Casella, Brand and Arshdeep add to the team's tally as it climbs to the second spot

HIL

Y.B. Sarangi
ROURKELA

Happy bunch: Toofans' two-goal hero Peillat, centre, and fellow goal-scorer Arshdeep celebrate a strike along with teammates. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Hyderabad Toofans rode on German drag-flicker Gonzalo Peillat's brace to record another come-from-behind win – its second in two days – in the Hockey India League at the Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium here on Sunday. The 5-1 victory over Vedanta Kalinga Lancers, its second outright win, took it to the No. 2 spot.

Lancers suffered because of their below-par short corner conversion – only one of 11 – while Toofans benefited from the great work of 'keepers Vikas Dahiya and Dominic Dixon as well as the defenders.

An eventful first quarter saw turnovers and eight penalty corners, of which Lancers earned five. Both sides scored a goal apiece, too.

Alex Hendrickx executed a low drag-flick to put Lancers ahead in the fifth minute and Peillat returned the favour in a similar manner in the next minute.

The closing seconds of the first period witnessed a heated exchange between players of both sides after Lancers were awarded their fifth penalty corner.

Going ahead

Maico Casella scored a freakish goal in the 21st minute to give Toofans the lead and the momentum.

The Argentinian, posted on the right, brought down Zachary Wallace's long aerial pass from the left and hammered in a cross-batted cricket shot from a narrow angle as the ball sailed over custodian Krishan Pathak's head and left him stunned. Lancers created some good moves in the second quarter but could not find the equaliser.

Toofans, after seeing Shilanand Lakra hitting straight into Pathak's body off a counter-attack, made it 2-1 as Peillat unleashed a diagonal drag-flick at the stroke of half-time.

Free-flowing end-to-end action continued in the second half.

But the hosts did not have the luck as an attempt from a short corner hit the post for a second time.

Toofans grew in confidence, attacked with composure and extended the lead early in the final quarter with Tim Brand tapping it in.

As Lancers removed their goalkeeper, the hard-working Arshdeep Singh scored another one for Toofans to seal the game.

The result: Hyderabad Toofans 5 (Peillat 6 & 30, Casella 21, Brand 47, Arshdeep 54) bt Vedanta Kalinga Lancers 1 (Hendrickx 5).

Jansen on the double as Warriors ease past Pipers in opening game

Santadeep Dey
RANCHI

Yibbi! Jansen, gung-ho after scoring a goal, led Warriors' charge against Pipers. K.R. DEEPAK

Colourful start: Folk artists perform during the opening ceremony of the Women's Hockey India League. K.R. DEEPAK

Yibbi Jansen, the most expensive foreign player of the first-ever women's Hockey India League, set the tone for the competition with a brace in the lung-opener as Odisha Warriors made a strong statement with a 4-0 win over Delhi SG Pipers at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Astro Turf Stadium here on Sunday.

Warriors produced a sterling defensive show in the first 15 minutes after opting to push-back. When Delhi midfielder Lily Owsley went on a run down the right flank, an alert Sakshi Rana marred the Rio 2016 gold medallist's attempt to cross the ball into the danger zone.

Meanwhile, Delhi custodian Elodie Picard's wrong-footed slide kept at bay the opposition skipper Neha Goyal, who had sneaked into the circle in the third minute.

Odisha sniffed an opportunity again in the second quarter when it won the first penalty corner of the game.

Dutch forward Freeke Moes' injection found compatriot Jansen, and the most successful goal-scorer at Paris 2024 didn't break a sweat as she found the target with a piercing drag-flick.

Five minutes later, Pipers looked to equalise through a penalty corner after a stray stick tackle from Lilly Stoffelsma. But Jyoti Singh made a mess while trapping the insertion. Sunelita Toppo and Mumtaz Khan's sizzling runs after the half-hour mark found little support from teammates.

And to add salt to the wounds, Jansen added to her tally through another penalty corner conversion.

Shoulders had begun to droop as Pipers meekly resigned to the status quo. Warriors, smelling blood, pumped in two more goals from open play as Baljeet Kaur and Moes joined the party.

The Delhi side earned a penalty corner in the dying moments of the game but the scoresheet remained unchanged.

The result: Odisha Warriors 4 (Jansen 16 & 37, Baljeet 42, Moes 43) bt Delhi SG Pipers 0.

Sabalenka and Zverev storm into round two

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Agence France-Presse
MELBOURNE

The quest begins: Sabalenka, who swept past Stephens in her opener, is looking to become the first woman since Hingis to win three consecutive titles at Melbourne Park. AFP

Aryna Sabalenka powered past Sloane Stephens to begin her quest for a third consecutive Australian Open crown on Sunday with Alexander Zverev and Zheng Qinwen also winning as storms caused havoc on day one of the Grand Slam.

Belarusian top seed Sabalenka had a first-set wobble but was otherwise in control against 2017 US Open champion Stephens, romping home 6-3, 6-2 in 71 minutes on Rod Laver Arena.

Sabalenka is aiming to become the first woman since Martina Hingis (1997-99) to win three consecutive titles at Melbourne Park.

If she lifts the winner's Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup again, she will join a select group of Margaret Court, Evonne Goolagong, Steffi Graf, Monica Seles and Hingis as the only women to complete a three-peat.

"Always tough matches against her," said Sabalenka, who won the Brisbane International in the lead-up. "I didn't play my best, probably, but I'm glad I was able to close the match in two sets."

Men's second seed Zverev was clinical in his match against French wildcard Lucas Pouille, who made the last four in 2019 before losing to eventual champion Novak Djokovic.

The German, who is on the same side of the draw as Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz, cruised home 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 as he bids to better the semifinal he made in 2024.

Olympic champion Zheng, the fifth seed and last year's losing finalist, had the honour of playing the first point on centre court against Romania's 110th-ranked Anca Todoni.

She came through 7-6 (3), 6-1 but was rusty after opting not to play a warm-up event.

Zheng had three set points on her own serve at 5-3 in the first set, but allowed Todoni to come roaring back before closing her down in the tiebreak then racing through the second set.

"The first match is always not easy," she said. "Just happy to get through the match, the tiebreak and find my rhythm."

The 22-year-old enjoyed a breakthrough 2024 with her Australian Open exploits helping spur her to Olympic gold – beating Iga Swiatek on the way – and three WTA titles.

While Zheng was able to play, the action on outside courts at Melbourne Park was halted barely an hour after it started when storms rolled in that turned the sky black.

India's Sumit Nagal lost to Czechia's Tomas Machac. The 27-year-old Nagal, 91st in the ATP rankings in singles, lost to his World No. 25 opponent 6-3, 6-1, 7-5 in two hours and five minutes.

FIRST ROUND RESULTS

Men: Fils (Fra) bt Virtanen (Fin) 3-6, 7-6(4), 6-4, 6-4; Nishikori (Jpn) bt Monteiro (Bra) 4-6, 6-7(4), 7-5, 6-2, 6-3; 6-Ruud (Nor) bt Munar (Esp) 6-3, 1-6, 7-5, 2-6, 6-1; Gaston (Fra) bt Jasika (Aus) 6-2, 3-6, 6-2, 6-2; Habib (Leb) bt Bu (Chn) 7-6(4), 6-4, 7-6(6); Martinez (Esp) bt Darderi (Ita) 6-3, 4-1, retd.; 24-Lehecka (Cze) bt Li (Aus) 6-1, 3-6, 6-3, 7-6(1); 26-Machac (Cze) bt Nagal (Ind) 6-3, 6-1, 7-5; 14-Humbert (Fra) bt Gigante (Ita) 7-6(5), 7-5, 6-4; 2-Zverev (Ger) bt Pouille (Fra) 6-4, 6-4, 6-4; Opelka (USA) bt Onclin (Bel) 3-6, 7-6(4), 6-3, 6-2; Halys (Fra) bt Walton (Aus) 4-6, 4-6, 6-4, 7-6(4), 7-5.
Women: 14-Andreeva (Rus) bt Bouzkova (Cze) 6-3, 6-3; 5-Zheng (Chn) bt Todoni (Rou) 7-6(3), 6-1; 18-Vekic (Cro) bt Parry (Fra) 6-4, 6-4; Maria (Ger) bt Pera (USA) 7-6(3), 6-4; 11-Badosa (Esp) bt Wang (Chn) 6-3, 7-6(5); Lamens (Ned) bt Erjavec (Slo) 7-5, 7-6(2); 30-Fernandez (Can) bt Starodubtseva (Ukr) 7-5, 6-4; Maneiro (Esp) bt Kartal (GBr) 6-1, 7-6(5); 1-Sabalenka (Blr) bt Stephens (USA) 6-3, 6-2; Tauson (Den) bt 29-Noskova (Cze) 5-7, 6-3, 6-4; Bucsa (Esp) bt Paquet (Fra) 6-2, 6-3; Blinkova (Rus) bt Saville (Aus) 1-6, 6-4, 7-5.

Fallen seed
Women: 29-Noskova

Saikia, Bhatia take over as secretary and treasurer of BCCI

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Devajit Saikia. PTI

Devajit Saikia's and Prabhtej Singh Bhatia's uncontested election as the secretary and treasurer, respectively, of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) was formalised during the BCCI's Special General Meeting (SGM) on Sunday.

With Saikia, the incumbent joint secretary, and Bhatia, who has earlier served as a councillor, being lone candidates in their respective categories, there was no need for a ballot vote. Election officer A.K. Joti formally appointed the duo as office-bearers in the SGM that lasted 10 minutes.

The need for election had arisen since Jay Shah and Ashish Shelar had to vacate their posts for varied reasons. While Shah resigned as secretary on November 30 before taking over as the International Cricket Council chair on December 1, Shelar had to step down immediately after being sworn in as a Minister in Maharashtra's Cabinet last month.

The BCCI will now have to conduct an election for joint secretary's post in the next 45 days, with Mumbai Cricket Association vice-president Sanjay Naik being a frontrunner to fill in till the AGM later this year.

Saikia played four Ranji Trophy games for Assam in 1990-91. However, he has had a glittering career ever since stepping into the Assam Cricket Association in 2016. He has been instrumental in developing the Barsapara Cricket Stadium in Guwahati.

Bhatia, a young entrepreneur, was a councillor for three years from 2019 to '22.

Atletico claims LaLiga lead

Agencies
VENICE

Julian Alvarez's strike helped Atletico Madrid move top of LaLiga with 1-0 win over Osasuna on Sunday.

Diego Simeone's side climbed one point clear of Real Madrid and six ahead of third-placed Barcelona at the halfway mark in the Spanish league season.

Inter Milan secured a 1-0 win at lowly Venezia on Sunday that lifted it to second place in Serie A.

The results: LaLiga: Las Palmas 1 (Januzaj 88) lost to Getafe 2 (Coba 70, Mayoral 86); Atletico Madrid 1 (Alvarez 55) bt Osasuna 0.
Serie A: Genoa 1 (Frendrup 65) bt Parma 0; Venezia 0 lost to Inter Milan 1 (Darmian 16).
Bundesliga: RB Leipzig 4 (Simons 23, 35, Sesko 47, Baumgartner 90) bt Werder Bremen 2 (Weiser 26, Burke 90+3).
On Saturday: Serie A: AC Milan 1 (Morata 51) drew with Cagliari 1 (Zortea 55); Torino 1 (Vlasic 45+1) drew with Juventus 1 (Yildiz 8).
Bundesliga: Borussia M'Gladbach 0 lost to Bayern Munich 1 (Kane 68-pen).
LaLiga: Espanyol 1 (Cabrera 2) drew with Leganes 1 (Cisse 14); Sevilla 1 (Pedrosa 90+3) drew with Valencia 1 (Rioja 61).

INBRIEF

14-year-old Ira Jadhav hits 346 in U-19 one-dayer

Fourteen-year-old Mumbai opener Ira Jadhav became the first Indian to score a triple hundred in u-19 cricket, when she made 346 against Meghalaya in the U-19 Women's One Day Trophy in Bengaluru on Sunday. Ira, a student of the Sharadashram Vidyamandir, the alma mater of Sachin Tendulkar, made her runs in 157 balls with 42 fours and 16 sixes. This is also the highest score in Youth List A matches by an Indian but the world record stands in the name of Lizelle Lee of South Africa, who made 427 in 2010.

Stage set for the Kho Kho World Cup

The Indira Gandhi Stadium in New Delhi on Sunday was abuzz with activity as the 24 participating nations came together to create a carnival atmosphere in the build-up to the inaugural Kho Kho World Cup. After the opening ceremony on Monday evening, the first game will see host India take on Nepal in the men's section. India is in Group A alongside Nepal, Peru, Brazil and Bhutan. In women's competition, 19 teams are taking part. Here too, India is in Group A with Iran, Malaysia and South Korea.

Shi and Se-young take the honours in Malaysia Open

China's Shi Yuqi captured the Malaysia Open men's singles badminton crown after a dominant 21-8, 21-15 victory over Denmark's Anders Antonsen in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday. In doing so, the World No. 1 extracted revenge over his World No. 2 opponent, having lost in straight games at the 2024 edition. South Korea's An Se-young, the World No. 1, defended the women's singles crown in style thrashing China's Wang Zhiyi 21-17, 21-7.

New Zealand recalls proven trio for Champions Trophy

Seasoned players Kane Williamson, Devon Conway and Lockie Ferguson were recalled on Sunday to an experienced New Zealand squad for the Champions Trophy one-day tournament.

The squad: Mitchell Santner (Capt.), Will Young, Devon Conway, Rachin Ravindra, Kane Williamson, Mark Chapman, Daryl Mitchell, Tom Latham, Glenn Phillips, Michael Bracewell, Nathan Smith, Matt Henry, Lockie Ferguson, Ben Sears and Will O'Rourke.

Shahidi to lead Afghanistan in Champions Trophy

Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) on Sunday announced that Hashmatullah Shahidi will lead the national side in its maiden ICC Men's Champions Trophy campaign.

The squad: Hashmatullah Shahidi (Capt.), Ibrahim Zadran, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Sediqullah Atal, Rahmat Shah, Ikram Alikhil, Gulbadin Naib, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mohammad Nabi, Rashid Khan, A.M. Ghazanfar, Noor Ahmad, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Farid Malik and Naveed Zadran. **Reserves**: Darwish Rasooli, Nangyal Kharoti and Bilal Sami.

LIVE TELECAST

Australian Open: Evening session, Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 1.30 p.m.

I-League: Sony Sports Ten 1 (SD & HD) & LIV, 2 & 4.30 p.m.

ISL: Sports 18-3 & JioCinema, 7.30 p.m.

Hockey: HIL, DD Sports, Sony Sports Ten 1, 2, 3 (SD & HD) & LIV, 8.15 p.m.

Kho-Kho World Cup: India vs Nepal, SS Select 1 & Hotstar, 8.30 p.m.

Serie A: gxr.world, 1.15 a.m. (Tuesday)

Australian Open: Sony Sports Ten 2, 5 (SD & HD) & LIV, 5.30 a.m. (Tuesday)

Haryana scrapes past Gujarat in a low-scoring thriller

Chasing a target of 197, the defending champion loses five wickets for 19 runs before crawling past the finish line in the 45th over; Karnataka awaits in the semifinals; leg-spinner Bishnoi's superb spell goes in vain for Axar's team

HAZARE TROPHY

The semifinal line-up:
Jan 15: Haryana vs Karnataka
Jan 16: Vidarbha vs Maharashtra

S. Dipak Ragav
VADODARA

Haryana made heavy weather of a modest chase before holding its nerve in the end to beat Gujarat by two wickets in the quarter-finals of the Vijay Hazare Trophy at the Kotambi Stadium here on Sunday.

In pursuit of 197, the defending champion was cruising to victory at 173 for three in the 35th over but found itself in trouble when it lost five wickets for 19 runs in the next eight.

Opener Himanshu Rana (66, 89b, 10x4) led the way for Haryana at the top, stroking a fine half-century. Rana and his fellow opener Arsh Ranga got their side off to a brisk start - the latter smashing left-arm pacer Arzan Nagwaswalla for five boundaries in the pacer's first two overs.

Rana batted sensibly without taking risks and stitched two crucial partnerships, a 54-run stand with Ankit Kumar for the second wicket and then added 55 alongside Parth Vats (38) for the third.

Seemingly out of nowhere, Haryana pressed the self-destruct button when victory was in sight.

Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi, introduced into the attack only in the 24th over, got Gujarat back into the contest by removing Rana, who was caught at covers.

The 24-year-old troubled the batters with his attacking lines and later struck thrice in three overs. Bishnoi dismissed the well-set Vats caught behind, then had Rahul Tewatia stumped and later castled Sumit Kumar to set the cat amongst the pigeons in Haryana's camp.

Ultimately, Dinesh Bana and Anshul Kamboj ensured their side huffed and puffed across the finish line to send Axar Patel's men packing.

Bowlers on the job

Earlier, the Haryana bowlers vindicated their skipper Ankit Kumar's decision to field first by bowling out Gujarat for just 196. Debutant pacer Anuj Thakral and left-arm spinner Nishant Sindhu were the wreckers-in-chief, scalping three wickets each.

The Gujarat batters showed poor application against some disciplined bowling.

After racing to 45 for no loss, Urvil Patel got run out, providing an opening for Haryana.

Thakral then took three wickets in four overs to break the back of the top-order, and the home state was soon in trouble at 84 for five in the 20th over.

During the middle overs, spinners Amit Rana and Sindhu further choked the flow of runs as the batters went into a shell.

From 137 for eight, Hemang Patel (54, 62b, 2x4, 5x6) played a valiant counter-attacking knock, raining sixes by slogging the bowlers through the leg-side to lend some respectability to the total, which almost proved enough.

The scores: Gujarat 196 in 45.2 overs (Hemang Patel 54, Anuj Thakral 3/39, Nishant Sindhu 3/40) lost to Haryana 201/8 in 44.2 overs (Himanshu Rana 66, Ravi Bishnoi 4/46).

Rajasthan 291/8 in 50 overs (Deepak Hooda 45, Shubham Garhwal 59, Kartik Sharma 62, Yash Thakur 4/39) lost to Vidarbha 292/1 in 43.3 overs (Dhruv Shorey 118 n.o., Karun Nair 122 n.o.).

Top knock: Himanshu Rana played a key role in Haryana's victory. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Karun. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Karun Nair slams his fourth straight List A century

Press Trust of India
VADODARA

Karun Nair scored his fifth century in the Vijay Hazare Trophy as Vidarbha outclassed Rajasthan by nine wickets to move into the semifinals here on Sunday.

Karun's unbeaten 82-ball 122 (13x4, 5x6) was the fifth hundred in his last six innings. His run reads 112 not out vs. J&K, 44 n.o. vs. Chhattisgarh, 163 n.o. vs. Chandigarh, 111 n.o. vs. Tamil Nadu, 112 vs. Uttar Pradesh, did not bat vs. Mizoram, 122 n.o. vs. Rajasthan. He now has 664 runs from eight matches.

He is now on par with Devdutt Padikkal, Kumar Sangakkara and Alviro Petersen with four successive List A hundreds. The record for most consecutive List A hundreds stands in the name of N. Jagadeesan (TN), who smashed five centuries on the trot in the 2021-22 Vijay Hazare Trophy.

Champions Trophy team selection deferred after BCCI's missive to ICC

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

India's squad for the Champions Trophy will be picked on January 19, a day after the Vijay Hazare Trophy final. This development came about after the BCCI asked the ICC for the squad submission deadline to be deferred by a week for the Indian team.

"We are waiting for some domestic matches that are going on, so, maybe, some good performance in the ongoing domestic matches will also be considered," Devajit Saikia, the newly elected BCCI secretary, told reporters here on Sunday. Despite Saikia's emphasis on the Vijay Hazare Trophy, *The Hindu* understands that the primary reason for the BCCI seeking extension is the fitness status of pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Shami.

Devajit Saikia. AFP

Bumrah, the Player of the Series in Australia despite sitting out of the last day's play in the series, is likely to take six more weeks to be match-fit after a recurrence of his back injury. It may result in him being match-fit only in March, with the league stage being all but done with.

Shami, meanwhile, is being monitored daily for his ankle and knee injuries that have kept him away since the 2023 World Cup. He is expected to feature in at least three of the five T20Is against England, starting January 22.

IPL from March 21

Meanwhile, the 18th edition of the Indian Premier League will be played from March 21 till May 25, with Kolkata expected to host the opener and the final. BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla confirmed the window after the IPL Governing Council met here on Sunday afternoon.

Shukla also indicated that the Women's Premier League has been deferred by a week and is now likely to start on February 14. He also confirmed that the third edition will be played in four venues - Mumbai (Brabourne), Vadodara, Lucknow and Bengaluru.

Tamil Nadu men, Railways women retain National basketball titles

Sports Bureau

Tamil Nadu and Railways comfortably defended their men's and women's titles respectively in the 74th National basketball championship at the Sidsar Sports Complex in Bhavnagar on Sunday.

Tamil Nadu men won 80-56 over Punjab after leading 48-26 at half-time. Railways posted an 86-53 victory over Kerala in the women's final after leading 46-36 at the interval.

The Most Valuable Player awards, with a Maruti WagonR car as prize, were bagged by Pranav Prince of Tamil Nadu and Dharshini Thirunavukkarasu of Railways.

The champion teams received ₹5 lakh each, and the runner-up ₹3 lakh.

On top: The victorious Tamil Nadu men's team. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Railways men and Tamil Nadu women won the third place and took home ₹2 lakh each.

R. Sreekala of Kerala and Kanwar Gurbaz Singh Sandhu were presented ₹50,000 each for their prowess in shooting three-pointers.

The results: Men: Final: Tamil Nadu 80 (Anantharaj 17, Aravind Kumar 17, Muin Bek Hafeez 15) bt Punjab 56 (Amritpal Singh 20, Amjyot Singh 15). **Third place:** Railways 71 (Sahaj Pratap Singh Sekhon 16, Santhosh Mani 14, Principal Singh 13, Tushal Singh 11, Papreet Singh 10) bt Karnataka 50 (Abhishek Gowda 19, Pratyanshu Tomar 11).

Women: Final: Railways 86 (Dharshini Thirunavukkarasu 16, Pushpa Senthil Kumar 14, Poonam Chaturvedi 13) bt Kerala 53 (R. Sreekala 18, Susan Florentina 17, V.J. Jayalakshmi 12). **Third place:** Tamil Nadu 86 (Nitika Amuthan 26, Krithika Sureshbabu 16, Harima Sundari 11, R. Sruthy 10) bt Delhi 64 (Garima Gosain 16, Namrata 12).

KARNATAKA ROUND-UP

Third consecutive win for Karnataka in BCCI U-19 Women's One Day Trophy

Karnataka won its third consecutive match in the BCCI U-19 Women's One Day Trophy in Surat after beating Chandigarh by five wickets on Sunday.

The scores:

Chandigarh 152 in 40.2 overs (Deepti Walia 66, Vandita K. Rao 3/29, Bhavika Reddy 3/21, V. Veda Varshini 3/18) lost to Karnataka 153/5 in 34 overs (Shreya S. Chavan 50, B.G. Tejashwini 31 n.o.).

Karnataka beats Pondicherry

Karnataka recorded its fourth win in the BCCI U-23 Women's T20 Trophy in Cuttack, beating Pondicherry by 74 runs on Sunday.

The scores:

Karnataka 136/8 in 20 overs (Krishika Reddy 36, G.R. Prerana 54) bt Pondicherry 62/8 in 20 overs (Sunayana 27 n.o., Shishira A. Gowda 4/14, P. Saloni 3/13).

Sports School beats Mysore Vijayanagar in KSFA Youth Premier League

BENGALURU: The Sports School bt Mysore Vijayanagar 5-1 in a tier-1 match of the KSFA Youth Premier League being held at the Bangalore Football Stadium, on Sunday.

Other results: BIFA bt Young Elite FC 3-0.

Tier-2: Conscient FC Bangalore bt William Soccer FC 3-0.

Boys Sports Company, MEG triumphs

Boys Sports Company, MEG blanked DYES-B 4-0 in the final to win the CCCA Chairos Bheemaiah Hockey 5's tournament being held here. AGORC finished third while SWR, Hubli came fourth.

The winner received a cash prize of ₹70,000, while the runner-up pocketed ₹50,000. The third- and fourth-placed teams earned ₹10,000 each.

Sachin from Boys Sports Company, MEG was declared the player of the tournament.

Rohit and Virat FILE PHOTO: K. MURALI KUMAR

Rohit, Kohli and others advised to play upcoming Ranji game

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

A majority of India's men's cricketers who returned from Australia earlier in the week after losing the Test series have been rested for the T20I series against England, starting January 22. However, the whole group, including the veteran duo of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, who are under fire, has been advised to participate in the Ranji Trophy round starting January 23 for their respective States.

Lack of First-Class game-time has been considered to be a major reason behind India's downfall, first at home against New Zealand followed by the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. As a result, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) hierarchy and the national selection panel has sent out feelers to all the cricketers to make the best effort to play in the remaining domestic First Class season. "It's not been made mandatory but it has been communicated to all the cricketers, even the fringe players, to play Ranji Trophy. If they don't, it will be up to the selectors to take suitable action," a BCCI insider revealed here on Sunday.

It will be interesting to see if Rohit, the Test and ODI captain, and former captain Kohli make a rare Ranji appearance. Both have struggled with the willow right through the season, thus making India's batting line-up appear fragile. While Kohli last featured in a Ranji game for Delhi in 2012, Rohit's last Ranji appearance was in November 2015. Mumbai will take on Jammu and Kashmir at home from Jan. 23 while Delhi will travel to Rajkot to face Saurashtra. With the duo expected to join the ODI squad and as a result miss the last round of the Ranji Trophy league stage starting on Jan. 30, it will be the only opportunity for both the veterans to play a competitive red-ball match.

Last season, Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer were not considered for the central contracts for having ignored the BCCI diktat to play domestic cricket.

The last week has seen frantic action in the Indian cricket corridors following India's inability to qualify for the World Test Championship final. A review meeting on Saturday night dissected the Australia tour and also discussed the way forward.

"We have the England series, following the Champions Trophy, so we have to think about one (assignment) at a time. We have had a lot of discussions during the last two days and we are trying to streamline our drawbacks and we have to overcome them," said Devajit Saikia, the newly-elected BCCI secretary. "We are taking all the experts' opinions also. We look forward to a very positive outcome of this discussion and exercise which we had over the last two days."

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CHANGE OF NAME

I KIRAN Yadav spouse of Visheswar Yadav resident 4th Main road,Bangalore,Karnatka have changed my name Kiran Yadav to Kiran Kumari Vide Affidavit dated 10–01–2025. Before 10 –01–2027,Nagappaya Benglore city

I, TARANG Agarwalla, S/O: Anup Agarwalla, R/O: C–1504, Vaswani Exquisite, ITPL Main Road, Whitefield, Mahadevapura, Bengaluru – 560048, Have Changed my Name to Tarang Agarwal. Vide affidavit 08/01/2025

TENDERS

Kottakkal Co-operative Urban Bank Ltd
Head Office: Kottappady, Malappuram DT, PIN-676503
Request for Proposal

RFP NO: KCUB/IT/CBS/2024-25/1 Date: 13-01-2025

Kottakkal Co-operative Urban Bank Ltd hereby invites competitive sealed bids under a two-cover system for the Supply, Implementation, Management and Maintenance of Core Banking Software, including integration with existing delivery channels.

The detailed scope of work, terms of reference, and deliverables are available for reference at the Bank's Head Office. Interested bidders may obtain the Request for Proposal (RFP) document by contacting the Bank's Head Office via email at **md@kottakkalurbanbank.com** on all working days during business hours.

The completed proposals, in the prescribed format, must be submitted no later than **16:00 Hours on Monday, February 03, 2024**. The Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids at its sole discretion without assigning any reason.

This notice is issued in the public interest by
Kottakkal Co-operative Urban Bank Ltd
Managing Director (S/d)
Contact Number: 0483-2740033
Web: https://kottakkalurbanbank.com

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GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND DIGITAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT
Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency (TNeGA)

E-TENDER NOTICE

Online tenders are invited by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency (TNeGA), towards Request for Proposal for Selection of Technical Service Provider (TSP) for Implementation, Operation and Maintenance of AUA/KUA Services with Aadhaar Data Vault for Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency, Government of Tamil Nadu.

The tender document (RFP) can be downloaded at free of cost from **https://tntenders.gov.in/** from **13.01.2025 16:00 hrs.**

Pre-bid meeting is scheduled online on **20.01.2025 at 11:30 hrs. through video conference (VC)** by TNeGA and the link for the VC can be referred in the RFP.

EMD for an amount of **Rs.7,50,000/-** has to be paid through online mode. Last date and time for online submission of bids through **https://tntenders.gov.in/** (e-Tender) is till **31.01.2025 16.00 hrs.** Technical Bid shall be opened online on **31.01.2025 at 16:30 hrs.** Bidders are advised to participate in the pre-bid meeting scheduled by TNeGA.

Chief Executive Officer,
Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency.

DIPR/162/TENDER/2025

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(A Government of Tamilnadu Undertaking)
No.417, Pantheon Road, Egmore, Chennai-600008.Phone:28191890/28190259; Fax: 044 -28190636

Sl. No.	Online Tender no with qty./ Document Cost	Sale Period	Pre bid	Submission	Opening
1	E1283/IHC/DME/RC/TNMSC/ENGG/2025 dt.10.01.2025 – Fully Automated Immuno Histochemistry Stainer (5) – Rs.5,725/-	13.01.2025 to 27.01.2025	21.01.2025 11.00 AM	28.01.2025 11.00 AM	28.01.2025 12.00 Noon
2	E1284/PFT/DME/RC/TNMSC/ENGG/2025 dt.10.01.2025 – PFT with DLCO (12) – Rs.5,725/-	13.01.2025 to 27.01.2025	21.01.2025 11.30 AM	28.01.2025 11.00 AM	28.01.2025 12.00 Noon
3	E1285/TCD/DME/RC/TNMSC/ENGG/2025 dt.10.01.2025 – Automated Peripheral Vascular Diagnostic System with Transcranial Doppler (15) – Rs.5,725/-	13.01.2025 to 27.01.2025	21.01.2025 12.00 Noon	28.01.2025 11.00 AM	28.01.2025 12.00 Noon
4	E1286/VM/RC/TNMSC/ENGG/2025 dt.10.01.2025 – Vortex Mixer (14) – Rs.5,725/-	20.01.2025 to 03.02.2025	27.01.2025 11.00 AM	04.02.2025 11.00 AM	04.02.2025 12.00 Noon
5	E1287/ANL/RC/TNMSC/ENGG/2025 dt.10.01.2025 – Semi Automated Coagulation Analyzer (43) – Rs.5,725/-	20.01.2025 to 03.02.2025	27.01.2025 11.30 AM	04.02.2025 11.00 AM	04.02.2025 12.00 Noon

EMD as specified in the tender document. For details visit **www.tntenders.gov.in** and TNMSC **website www.tnmsc.tn.gov.in**

DIPR/134/TENDER/2025 **GENERAL MANAGER (EQUIPMENT)**

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

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(Through KPP Portal Only)

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Office of the Chief Engineer (South), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009.

Sl. No.	Division	IFT Number	Sl. No.	Amount Put to Tender / EMD Amount	Last Date & Time for Submission of Tender	Date & Time for Opening of Tender
1	(South-West-1)	BWSSB/EESW-1/TO/PB/4076/2024-25 Dated: 09-01-2025	1	Rs. 8,71,346/- / Rs. 21,800/-	22-01-2025 Upto 4.00 PM	24-01-2025 After 3.00 PM

Sd/- Executive Engineer (South-West-1)

Office of the Chief Engineer (WWM-West), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009.

2	(WWM-STP-H&A.V)	BWSSB/EE (WWM-STP-H&A.V)/PB/517/2024-25 Dated: 06-01-2025	1	Rs. 28.57 Lakhs / Rs. 57,138/-	20-01-2025 Upto 5.30 PM	22-01-2025 After 11.00 AM

Sd/- Executive Engineer (WWM-STP-H&A.V)

Office of the Chief Engineer (Design & QA), 9th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009.

3	(MIS)	BWSSB/EMS/MS-1/AE/244/2024-25 Dated: 08-01-2025	1	Rs. 50,45,793/- / Rs. 1,21,000/-	20-01-2025 Upto 3.00 PM	21-01-2025 at 4.00 PM

Sd/- Executive Engineer (MIS)

Office of the Chief Engineer (East-2), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560009.

4	(East-2)	BWSSB/2024-25/WS/WORK_INDENT1892/CALL-3	1	Rs. 89,18,100/- / Rs. 1,78,400/-	20-01-2025 Upto 4.00 PM	21-01-2025 at 4.00 PM
5		BWSSB/2024-25/WS/WORK_INDENT1813/CALL-3	2	Rs. 53,96,000/- / Rs. 1,07,920/-		

Sd/- Executive Engineer (East-2)

The details regarding the tender and participation in the e-Procurement Portal process can be obtained by logging on to **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**. For further details contact the above signed office during working hours. DIPR/CP/Adverto/4276/2024-25

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What have they learnt?

Outcome-Based Learning focuses on measurable skills and ensures that students are equipped for real-world challenges

M.G. Sethuraman

The Economic Survey 2023-2024 indicates that 65% of India's fast-growing population is below the age of 35. Of this, only 51.25% of the country's youth are employable. This is because they lack the skills needed for the current industrial sectors. The report highlights the fact that there exists a gap between what is taught in educational institutions and what is needed by industry and society.

Of late, there has been an increased effort to focus on the learner rather than the teacher in India. Intensive measures are being undertaken to bridge the gap between teaching and learning but the focus is on the process, not the outcome. Educational outcomes are the abilities the students acquire and demonstrate at the end of the learning experience. Hence the emphasis at the global level is on the educational outcomes.

What is OBE?

The Learning Outcome Framework (LOCF), which has been adopted in India, expects the teachers to visualise what the students will be able to do by undergoing the course/programme and how to measure their ability to do what they should and to facilitate acquisition of the ability expected of them. Outcome-Based Education (OBE) requires that the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment focus on student learning outcomes. This method of curricular design and teaching pre-fixes how students can apply their knowledge and skills after they complete a course/programme. Thus, the learning outcomes are predecided and the course content, delivery and assessment are planned to achieve the desired outcomes, which need to be well-defined, realistic and measurable.

The advantage of adoption of OBE based approach is that both students and the teachers are aware of the desired outcomes from the beginning. Further, the approach trains students working towards the goal. The teaching and assessment methodologies need to be more flexible enabling students to showcase their mastery. National agencies like National Accreditation Assessment Council (NAAC) and National Bureau of Accreditation (NBA) emphasise the adoption of LOCF and expect the institutions to spell out the Graduate Attributes, Programme Outcomes and Course Outcomes. Institutions should also periodically check for the attainment of these outcomes, so that remedial measures can be undertaken both at the institutional level and personal level.

To enhance the employability of learners, the teaching and learning process must be changed. Online education has changed classroom teaching and experiential learning and problem-solving skills with an application-oriented approach can produce the right impact. Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) should turn into centres where talent nurturing is given priority. Even assessment methodologies need to change and test higher-order thinking skills and promote critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

However, it is not enough to just design a purposeful curriculum. Teachers also need to be trained in this novel approach. Moving towards a student-centric approach from a teacher-centric one is a challenge as is fine tuning the academic curriculum to the changing needs of the industry with the available expertise in educational institutions. However, this can be overcome by involving industrial experts.

With the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, emphasising the adoption of the Learning Outcome Framework in HEIs, the OBE model of education, which aims to bring out the graduate's potential, will enhance the employability potential of the graduates.

The writer is Professor, Dean, School of Sciences and Senior Prof of Chemistry, Gandhigram Rural Institute-Deemed To Be University.

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